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THE

NEW REPUBLIC

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America LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

Buchanan Turns on the
Reform Party JOHN B. JUDIS

JUNE 26, 2000

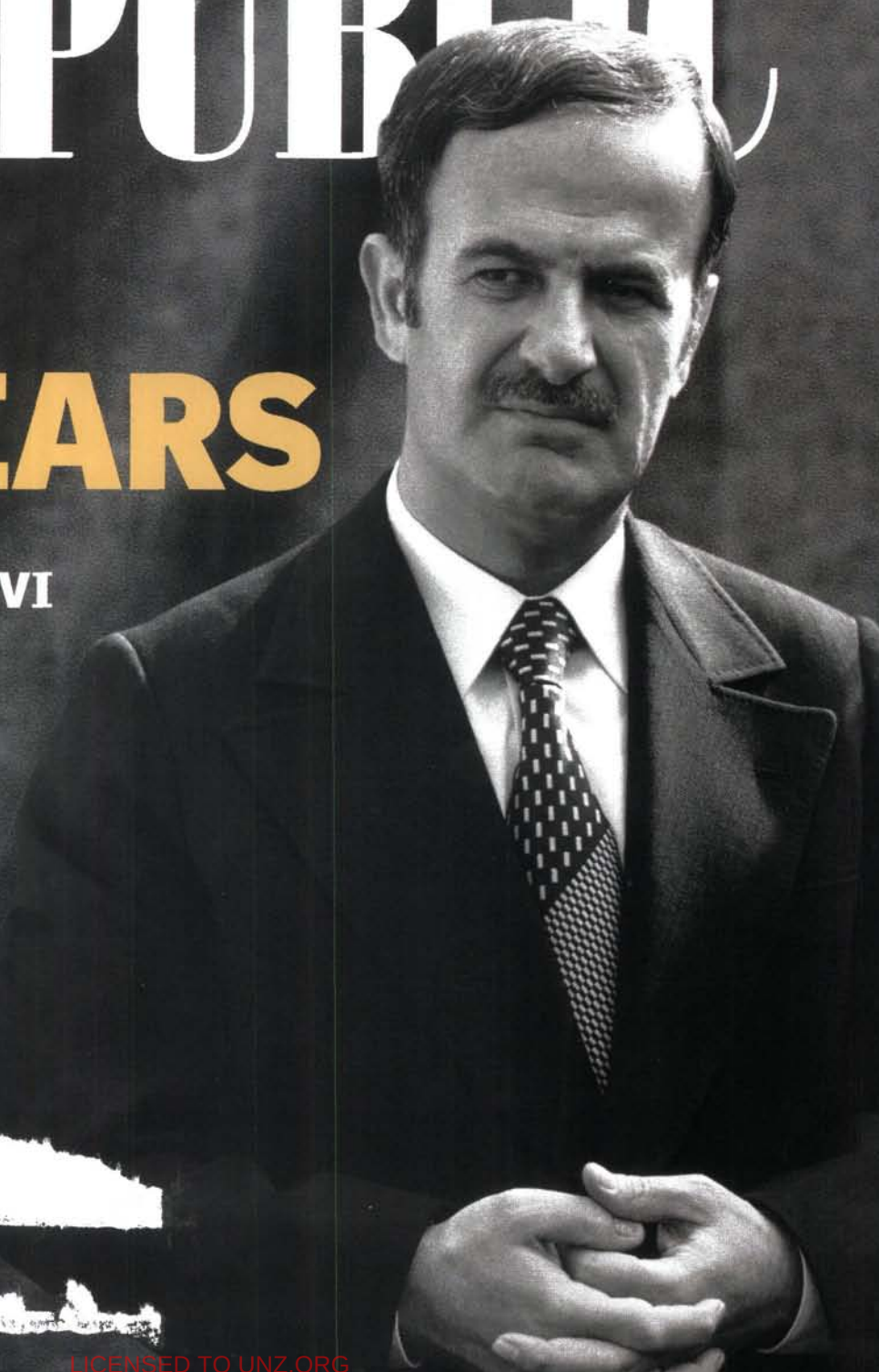
SHED NO TEARS

YOSSI KLEIN HALEVI

DANNA HARMAN
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On the Cover : Photo of Hafez al-Assad by ABBAS/MAGNUM PHOTOS

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Father of the slide

TO THE EDITORS:

I enjoyed and appreciated (mostly) Jonathan Rauch's analysis of the Bush presidency ("Father Superior," May 22). Bush was indeed someone steady at the helm who could usually be counted on to do the right thing, which, for a president, often can be to "do no harm." The president's most important responsibility is guiding America through a dangerous world, and Bush excelled at this.

I believe, however, that Rauch is too charitable to Bush for breaking his tax pledge. If a man's word is his bond, this was a low moral point for the president. Controlling spending would have brought the deficit down, and it was already headed in that direction, due to the declines in military spending and the resolution of the savings-and-loan crisis. Moreover, the economic condition of this country in 1989 was in no way as ominous as Rauch writes. The '80s were a decade of economic growth, a re-armed military, lower tax rates, fewer tax brackets (indexed for inflation), and falling interest rates. These benefits—investments, if you will—were worth the higher deficit. Today, the economy continues to grow from this lower-tax-rate structure brought about in the '80s, among other improvements, and the deficit continues to decline.

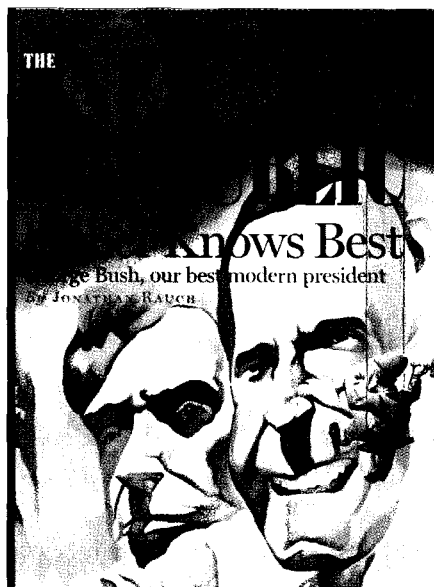
PETER MURPHY
Troy, New York

TO THE EDITORS:

I was extremely shocked and disappointed by the recent cover story on George Bush senior, "our best modern president," which was one of the more superficial and irresponsible pieces of journalism I can recall. For it to appear in *THE NEW REPUBLIC*, a magazine with a grand tradition of intelligent, progressive thought, is especially troubling.

Jonathan Rauch's case for Bush is astonishingly weak. It gives him credit for a series of international developments—the collapse of the Soviet Union and the reunification of Germany—in which his role was absolutely minimal. Even Rauch is reduced to stating his praise in almost entirely negative terms: not "messing things up." And he fails to point out several instances when Bush's weak leadership did mess things up (Yugoslavia and Somalia, for example).

But what is far more egregious is the article's total failure to grapple with serious domestic issues. The condition of average Americans worsened signifi-



cantly during the Bush administration on almost all important fronts. Unemployment rose from 5.5 percent to 7.5 percent. Child poverty climbed from 19 percent to 22 percent. Average wages fell; income inequality, violent crime, teenage drug abuse, and teenage childbirth all rose; and the percentage of Americans without health insurance increased from 13.4 to 15.

The common perception of Bush as an out-of-touch, elitist, country-club Republican entirely lacking in vision is not a myth but a fact confirmed by the hard data of those years, during which Bush failed to undertake any important initiatives to reverse those disastrous social trends. It is also worth noting that many of these same national statistics began to improve perceptibly under the Clinton administration, which—with all its limitations, faults, and failures—nonetheless took important steps such as raising the minimum wage, increasing taxes for the wealthy, passing the crime bill, and restricting access to guns, as well as overseeing modest increases in social spending and education.

For Rauch to fail even to address these issues and for *TNR* not to supply some kind of reply or rebuttal is a sign of extreme journalistic superficiality. In recent

years, *TNR* has prided itself on making clever "counterintuitive" arguments and tweaking prevailing wisdom (especially if it is liberal prevailing wisdom). But simply saying the opposite of what others believe becomes its own kind of knee-jerk response, forcing one, often, to assert the silliest things against all evidence in order to seem clever.

ALEXANDER STILLE
New York, New York

TO THE EDITORS:

I read with amusement Jonathan Rauch's piece on George Bush. So he's the greatest modern president? I quote from an editorial in *TNR* dated November 23, 1992, immediately after Clinton's stunning victory over the hapless Bush:

Well, we asked for it. The decisive victory for the Clinton-Gore ticket, as our colleague TRB elaborately details it this week, is grist for glee. On this Wednesday morning, as we go to press, we might as well let rip the sublime emotions that now surge through the veins. Good riddance to George Bush, to his negligence, recklessness, and cynicism. Good riddance to his incompetent excuse for a foreign policy, to his ignorance and avoidance of the social ills of our country, to his failed economic agenda, and to his incoherent verbiage that sensible people had to accept as public discourse for four long years. . . . Good riddance too to all the fanatical hangers-on, whose loyalty to Bush was paper-thin, but whose disproportionate power within the Republican coalition allowed them to poison the atmosphere in this country for the last twelve years: to Helms and Buchanan, Dannemeyer and Bennett, Gingrich and Dornan. The list of clods, mediocrities, blue-haired bigots, egomaniacs, suck-ups, empty suits, and do-nothings goes on and on. Good riddance to them all.

And Rauch now tells us (and presumably believes in good faith) that Bush is the greatest modern president of our time! The words penned by the editors nearly eight years ago ring loud and true today. Bush was and is a political hack. He should go down in history as a man who took to heart with authentic fervor and altruism only the cause of population control, so much so that Wilbur Mills, then chairman of the Ways and Means Committee, dubbed him "Rubbers."

WARREN L. CLARK
Amarillo, Texas

The editors welcome correspondence from readers. Please address letters to Correspondence, *TNR*, 1220 19th Street NW, Washington, D.C. 20036 (letters may also be sent electronically to tnr@aol.com). All letters should include the writer's full name, address, and telephone number; be typed double-spaced; and be fewer than 200 words. Letters may be edited for space and clarity. Please do not send letters via fax.

TO THE EDITORS:

Great Caesar's ghost! So George Bush was the greatest modern president? A political Superman? Where were Lois and Clark on this story? If this is true, I want to know why he worked for Lex Luthor for eight years. He saw all of those schemes unfolding (the Iran-Contra scandal, the S&L crisis, the ballooning deficit) and never once tried to put a stop to them. If he was the greatest modern president, then he was also the worst vice president. Unless ... unless somebody slipped kryptonite into his pork rinds. Jimmy! Get me the file on Ollie North! No wonder Bush was out of the loop.

GARY CROOKS
Spokane, Washington

Faux pas

TO THE EDITORS:

Jon Henley's article ("Provincialism," May 22) states that Brittany was joined with France when "an unfortunate ruler of Brittany, François, signed the Indissoluble Act of Union with the Crown of France in 1524." There was an important European ruler in 1524 named François I—but he was the king of France, not a duke of Brittany. François I was one of the great figures of the Renaissance: opponent of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V, ally of Ottoman Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, builder of the Chateau of Chambord, and patron of Leonardo da Vinci. (There was also a Breton ruler named François I, but he died in 1450, and Brittany was still independent at his death.) The key figures in the amalgamation of France and Brittany were the Duchess Anne of Brittany, who was the wife successively of the French kings Charles VIII and Louis XII, and her daughter Claude, who married François I in 1514. Claude died in 1524, and the formal union of the two countries occurred in 1532.

J.M. GRAY
Baltimore, Maryland

Bad judgment

TO THE EDITORS:

The editorial regarding the Lockerbie trial betrays a comprehensive ignorance of the issues ("Trial and Error," May 15). The fact that two Libyan intelligence officers are being prosecuted in a Scottish court for murder represents an achievement for American foreign policy and the best chance of securing justice for the victims of Pan Am Flight 103, not the "huge public-relations victory" for Muammar Qaddafi that you assert.

First, the background you neglected. At the time the United States and Great

Britain hammered out the agreement to hold the trial, the U.N. sanctions regime was on the verge of collapse, with America and Britain standing virtually alone in their determination to maintain sanctions. The administration faced the choice of either being isolated without options or employing creative diplomacy to keep the pressure on the Libyans. That the administration leveraged its little remaining influence to get the Libyans to surrender the suspects for trial before sanctions enforcement fell apart was no small feat.

Holding a trial in a court of the country that has jurisdiction fulfills a fundamental demand for justice. Placing the court in the Netherlands—albeit in a military camp temporarily under British sovereignty—is a small gesture without substantive consequences. TNR's unexplained skepticism about Scottish law notwithstanding, this is a real trial by a real court operating under real laws. If the defendants are convicted, they will serve real time. TNR's judgment that the Libyans will probably win is unsubstantiated: What are the "peculiarities of the judicial system under which ... they are being tried"? The use of a panel of judges instead of a jury? In the age of O.J. Simpson, that hardly seems like an objection. In fact, American legal experts believe the Libyans blundered, because an American trial would have brought with it more restrictive rules of evidence.

Your assumption that Qaddafi is off the hook is also off the mark. The United States and Britain have maintained all along that they will follow the evidence wherever it leads. U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's pledge that the trial would not seek to undermine the Libyan government in no way limits the scope of the trial. Indeed, that pledge simply means that Western courts are not in the business of conducting political trials. If the defendants Fhimah and Megrahi finger Qaddafi, the United States will indict him. The likelihood of that happening may be low, but it is not negligible. Hard evidence of Qaddafi's involvement will also make it hard for Russia, China, and France to veto the reimposition of sanctions, as you predict. The proposition that anyone in the administration advocates lifting U.S. sanctions—and can imagine pulling that off politically—is risible.

Would TNR be satisfied with anything short of bombing or a covert operation to topple Qaddafi? Since these would likely result in failure (giving Qaddafi a *real* p.r. victory), killing civilians or, given the main opposition in Libya, bringing an Islamist government to power, they would

not only be self-defeating but would likely reignite the terrorism that the United States has sought to end.

TNR should look at the facts: Keeping sanctions in place for so long forced Libya to change its behavior. No American has been killed or wounded by Libyan-sponsored terrorism in years, and all signs indicate that Libya is out of the terror business and desperately eager to rehabilitate itself. Indeed, Tripoli has evicted the Abu Nidal organization, once the principal terrorist group resident in Libya. Qaddafi remains a loathsome figure; it is hard to imagine the United States ever warming relations with his regime. But obtaining justice for the victims and ending Libyan terrorism are real accomplishments that should not be obscured by easy moralizing and ill-conceived calls for regime change.

DANIEL BENJAMIN
*Senior Fellow
United States Institute of Peace
Washington, D.C.*

STEVEN SIMON
*Assistant Director and Carol Deane
Senior Fellow for U.S. Security Studies
International Institute for
Strategic Studies
London, England*

Laboratory of democracy

TO THE EDITORS:

Siddhartha Mukherjee suggests that it is misguided to ban gene patents or eliminate the associated profit motive that entices researchers into the private sector ("Wrong Map," May 8). Indeed, he proposes a strategy that would encourage the earlier defection of academic researchers to for-profit biotechnology enterprises. Once there, they would ostensibly engage in the kind of efficient research of which their academic counterparts, by implication, are incapable.

Mukherjee ignores the baneful effect this would have on the progress of research. Scientific progress is crucially dependent on collaboration and the free flow of information among researchers. It has convincingly been argued that researchers working for private companies are less likely to share information in meetings with their academic colleagues, less likely to publish results in an expeditious manner, and generally inhibited in doing both by the companies for which they work. The issuance of patents—by enabling the imposition of controls on the

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TRB

FROM WASHINGTON

Dumb and Dumber

ACCORDING TO CHRISTINA Hoff Sommers's new book, *The War Against Boys*, 35 percent of college-age men in 1998 confessed that they had read nothing for pleasure in the previous twelve months. Browsing through the current selection of men's magazines, I can begin to see why. Something truly difficult has been happening to the genre recently: It's been getting even dumber. The most successful, *Maxim*, sets the pace. Its cover features the slogan "Sex, Sports, Beer, Gadgets, Clothes, Fitness," in descending order of importance. The June issue features a primer on penis size ("How It's *Really* Hangin'"), a moronic guide to becoming a millionaire ("Rule #4: Ditch Your Loser Friends"), page after page of scantily dressed babes, and what at first looks like an actual piece of reportage until you read the subhead: "In a sleepy town in New Mexico, David Parker Ray and his family abducted women and held them captive inside his specially equipped trailer. Was it a twisted sex game or something far worse?" The reward for this drek, according to *The New York Times*, is the fattest ad revenue of any self-styled "men's magazine" in America—\$7.7 million a year—for a journal that's only a couple of years old.

Of course, if you want erudition, you can always peruse another new entrant into the market, *FHM* ("For Him Magazine"), whose feature article in the July issue is titled "A Lifetime of Sex." "At the age of 75 you'll have had sex 5,472 times with 22 women," the subhead reads. "Here's how you'll get there." With competition like this, it's no surprise that even *Esquire* led a recent cover with "153 Things a Man Should Know About Sex" or that *GQ*, easily the class act of the bunch, showcases "Eye-Candy Thandie" Newton, the lithe female star of *M:I-2*.

These days, it's extremely hard to be a man vaguely connected to a brain. The state of men's magazines is only the half of it. Two generations of full-blooded feminism have ended with round-the-clock

wrestling channels, *Shanghai Noon*, and Tom Cruise following Stanley Kubrick with John Woo. Even homosexual men, who once might have constituted some cultural firewall against unbridled testosterone, are now bulging with steroids, living in the gym, and starting rugby leagues. The notion of the "gentleman," or indeed any notion of masculinity attached to gentility, has almost vanished from the cultural air. What happened, one wonders, and why?

I guess you could start by observing that many areas of life that were once "gentlemanly" have simply been opened to women and thus effectively demasculinized. A college education, for one thing, along with all the journals, books, and conversations that go along with it, is now thoroughly—and rightly—integrated. Education is no longer a function of becoming a man but a function of becoming a non-gendered citizen. There are whole swaths of public life—business, politics, sports, and so forth—that once inculcated a form of refined masculinity but are now unsexed. Even military schools and seminaries, once the ultimate male bastions, have thrown open their doors to women.

I'm not going to quibble with this. Why should I? Greater opportunity for women is probably the most significant gain for human freedom in the last century. But with this gain has come a somewhat unexpected problem: How do we restore a sense of masculinity that is vaguely civilized? Take their exclusive vocations away, remove their institutions, de-gender their clubs and schools and workplaces, and you leave men with more than a little cultural bewilderment. The only things left that are predominantly male—sex with women, beer, gadgets, sex with women, cars, beer, and more gadgets, to judge from men's magazines—tend to be, shall we say, lacking in elevation.

A certain type of feminism is, I think, part of the problem. By denying any deep biological or psychological difference between the sexes, some influential feminists refuse to countenance any special treatment for men and boys. They see even the ethic of the gentleman as sexist and regard the excrescences of the current male pop culture as a function of willful hostility to women rather than the clumsy attempt to find something—anything—that men still have in common. So, while women are allowed an autonomous culture and seem to have little problem making it civilized, men are left to their own devices, with increasingly worrying results.

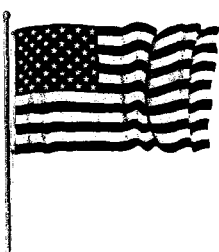
Take a look at education. American boys are now far behind girls in high school. As Sommers points out in her book, the Department of Education reports that "the gap in reading proficiency between males and females is roughly equivalent to

about one and a half years of schooling." The gender gap in American colleges is now ten percentage points—55 percent of students are women and 45 percent are men—and growing fast. Yet any attempts to address this problem with single-sex classes or schools for boys, for example, meet with ferocious opposition and more often than not get struck down in the courts. The more extreme examples of this ideology come in the ludicrous attempts to police gender stereotypes as early as kindergarten, even when those "stereotypes" conform to the way little boys and little girls have naturally interacted, or not interacted, for millennia.

You can understand how we got here, of course. For far too long, girls and women were second-class citizens, marginalized, frustrated, punished, and denied the possibility of advancement. But a visit to any American college campus today will show how far we have come from those pernicious days. Instead, we are arguably at the beginning of a different crisis—a crisis of the American male. Until we find a way for men to chart a course that is not dependent on the subjugation of women and yet is unmistakably their own, that crisis will continue. This means not denying or condemning male difference but harnessing it, guiding it, and moralizing it. There's a cultural hunger for this, I think. It helped fuel the presidential candidacy of Arizona Senator John McCain, for example, inasmuch as he epitomized an unapologetic masculinity based on sacrifice and duty rather than machismo and narcissism. Call it the reinvention of the gentleman—for an era when gender is not an excuse for oppression but when its natural basis is not denied, either.

Mercifully, this needn't involve some Robert Bly-like men's movement, let alone a self-conscious masculinity constantly talking to and about itself. Men simply need to be able to do more things together—preferably things of a somewhat more elevated nature than throwing or kicking or hitting a ball. There are many small ways this could happen: a revival of single-sex colleges and schools, the re-establishment in the culture of all-male clubs, the extension of big-brother programs, and so on. But, more generally, a decent amount could be accomplished simply by stopping the intolerance of such things that now passes for civilized consensus among American elites. I'm not sure if there's a political coalition capable of this, and I fear male cultural decline may be too advanced to be swiftly reversed. But I do know it's worth our making an effort. And that even greater sales of *Maxim* will be the consequence if we don't.

ANDREW SULLIVAN



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Where We Stand

A commentary on public education and other critical issues

"Building a Profession"

By SANDRA FELDMAN, President
American Federation of Teachers

When the AFT recently released its report on how to improve teacher education, our call for a national test for those entering the teaching profession got a lot of favorable notice. And it should have. Our proposal that prospective teachers pass a rigorous exam in a subject-matter field as well as pedagogy is no more than other professions expect—in fact, most states already have some form of test. However, we proposed a high-level *national* exam because we believe teachers should know and be able to teach their subjects well whether they are in California or Mississippi.

But to some extent this excitement about teacher testing has obscured the rest of our report. That's too bad because what we were offering was nothing less than a blueprint for redesigning the way U.S. teachers are educated and inducted into their profession.

Poles Apart

There are two schools of thought about the best way to educate future teachers. While both sides agree that current teacher education programs don't do a very good job, their proposals for change could not be more different.

According to the people I'll call the "deregulators," we should forget about demanding that prospective teachers meet high academic standards or offering them any kind of teacher-specific education. In fact, the deregulators recommend that we get rid of teacher education programs and most requirements for licensing. Let college graduates who have academic majors and want to be teachers go into the classroom and figure out for themselves how to teach. After all, the deregulators say, teaching, unlike heart surgery, is primarily a matter of trial and error.

The other school of thought, the one represented by our report, calls for raising standards—both for teacher education programs and for prospective teachers. We believe all new teachers should have a strong liberal arts education, an academic major, and on-the-job mentoring with master teachers. And they should pass high-level professional exams. These requirements would strengthen the professional component of teaching and bring it more in line with other professions like medicine or law. Here are some of our specific recommendations:

- ◆ Require two years of core courses in subjects like mathematics, science, and English language arts to ensure that future teachers have a good foundation in the liberal arts.
- ◆ Raise the GPA required to enter a teaching program from 2.5 (a C average) to 2.75 and, eventually, 3.0; and replace the low-level exam testing basic literacy that is used by many states



AFT calls for higher standards for new teachers and teacher education programs.

with one requiring students to show college-level proficiency in core subject areas *before* they enter a teaching program.

- ◆ Require a major in an academic subject area so students have a firm grounding in the subject they are preparing to teach.

- ◆ Develop a core of pedagogical knowledge that all teachers should have. Today we have a body of knowledge based on new research, and the research evidence has led, for example, to a consensus that has ended the "Reading Wars." College-level courses that reflect this new knowledge will help young teachers make the important decisions about how best to shape their lessons.

- ◆ Strengthen what we call the "clinical experience"—that is, the actual training on the job. Much of the practice teaching that prospective teachers get is brief (10 to 12 weeks) and it is often hit or miss. Spending an extended period of time in a well-run program, under the tutelage of a master teacher, would give young teachers an experience similar to the one that physicians get from an internship.

- ◆ Require a tough licensing exam that would demand college-level competency in subject matter and pedagogy. This would replace the current state exams that are often set at a basic level.

- ◆ Strengthen induction programs. In too many—perhaps most—places, sink-or-swim is still the rule for beginning teachers. A good induction program in which beginners get help from experienced teachers not only strengthens young teachers' skills; it also prevents teacher drop-out.

Teaching is far more complicated than people who have never tried it understand. And it will become more complex as we go forward in the information age. We owe it to our children to be sure their future teachers are able to meet that challenge.

These are ambitious changes, necessary ones, we believe, and they will require a new and unprecedented cooperation between institutions of higher education and public schools. But we already have some pioneer programs, like the ones at the University of Cincinnati and Montclair University in New Jersey, and the work now is to make that excellence universal. ■

The report, "Building a Profession," can be downloaded from the AFT web site (www.aft.org).

Where We Stand is published once every month in *The New Republic*. To comment, write to Sandra Feldman, AFT, 555 New Jersey Ave. N.W., Washington, DC 20001. © Sandra Feldman 2000. Visit our web site (<http://www.aft.org>).



Shed No Tears

HAFEZ AL-ASSAD WAS the leader in the Middle East least moved by the prospect of peace. It was not until the early '90s, in fact, that the word "peace" was added to the morbid rhetoric of the presidential palace in Damascus. When the Soviet Union collapsed,

Assad lost his military and ideological patron, and he found it necessary to speak words that the United States wished to hear. The words "liberation" and "victory," with which his dour and inhumane speeches of the 1970s and '80s were riddled, did not arouse the Americans. But the word "peace" aroused them. It was not lost upon the sly Syrian tyrant that "peace" could be another means toward "liberation" and "victory."

Assad's wholly tactical attitude toward peace certainly advanced his cause in Washington. When this profoundly unadmirable man died last week, American officials searched for a vocabulary of praise that would capture both their hopes and their frustrations regarding the Syrian-Israeli impasse, and they settled on a formula: the deceased Syrian president had made "a strategic choice for peace." But this formula captured only their illusions. Assad had made a strategic choice, all right; but it was a strategic choice to recover all of the Golan Heights and to rehabilitate his seriously crippled army. Both of those objectives, he correctly understood, could be accomplished only under cover of the peace process the United States was frantically sponsoring; and so the man who liked to reiterate at all times "Either martyrdom or victory" went to Madrid in 1991, and subsequently developed a sinister skill for telling his interlocutors to go to hell and calling it diplomacy.

Bill Clinton received the news of Assad's death at a commencement ceremony in Minnesota. According to *The New York Times*, "[the president] visibly sighed and shook his head as he read the note." The accompanying photograph shows the president biting his lip. (Is there any doubt that the most durable feature of the Clinton administration is that lip?) Clinton's wistfulness was grotesquely misplaced. "While we had our disagreements," he told reporters, "I always respected him because I felt that he was open and straight-

forward with me, and because I felt he had ... made a strategic choice for peace." Assad, open? He was the most tenebrous of modern rulers. Straightforward, perhaps: No, no, a thousand times no is certainly not a circumlocution. Clinton then counseled patience, observing that "there will be a period of sorting out, and the Syrian people will make some decisions." But the Syrian people are precisely the people who will *not* make some decisions about Syria's course after Assad. His regime, after all, was an authoritarian presidential monarchy, and in the hours after his death it also became a dynastic presidential monarchy, as the constitution was comically

amended to allow his son to succeed him. It was also a regime that brutalized—and, most notably in Hama in 1982, massacred—its own people.

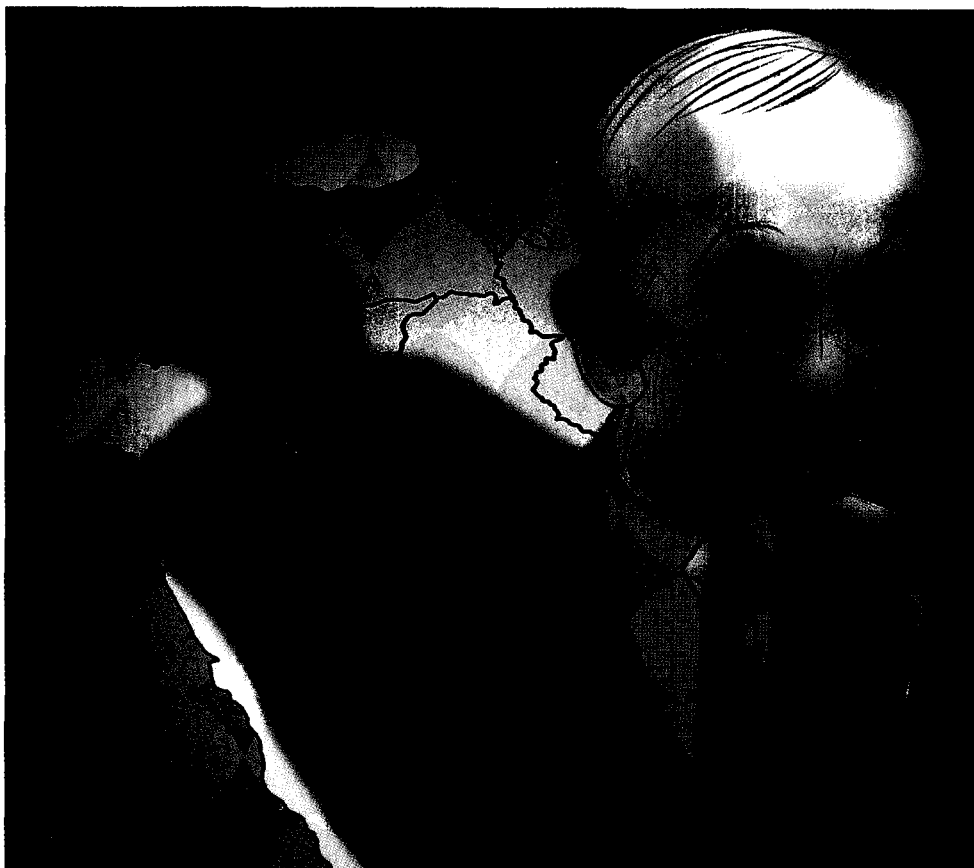
So why was the president of the United States, who should despise just about everything that the president of Syria said and did, speaking moistly? One answer is that this president flourishes in moisture: he is an emotional athlete, and emotional athleticism is his method. Another answer is that the peace process promotes everybody it touches into a giant bestriding the earth. Never mind that Assad was a closed man from the mountains, an intensely local man who believed mainly in power and prudence, and lived mainly to vindicate his own tribe by proving with his ruthlessness that the Alawites of Syria, who comprise only twelve percent of the country's population, are prouder and more loyal Arabs than the Sunnis of Syria, who are the overwhelming majority. In American eyes, even those who reject the peace process are part of the peace process, the way a poisonous drink is still a drink. And there is still another reason for the president's tender reception of the news from Damascus, which might be described as the Carterization of Clinton. He has discovered that sometimes there is more satisfaction to be found for an American president abroad than at home; and also more of an opportunity to play the moralist. For Clinton, as for Carter, foreign policy has become what Saul Bellow once called a "moral resort area."

The administration's eternally upbeat view of the peace process in the Middle East last week took the form of an intense hope that the ascension of Bashar al-Assad marks a modernizing turn in Syrian life. The new leader is, after all, an ophthalmologist. He lived in London for three years, and he speaks English, and he admires Phil Collins. Most thrilling of all, he digs the Internet. "Doctor Bashar," as his countrymen call him, heads a group called the Syrian Computer

Society, which offers free computer courses. (For many Syrians, such a course would mean a leap from the preindustrial to the postindustrial.) These facts scintillate the many officials and journalists in America who are idolaters of technology, and economists in foreign policy, and devout believers in the doctrine that freedom follows computers.

Never mind that there is no evidence that an affection for the British soft rock of the '80s inclines one toward territorial compromise. This optimism also ignores the history of various Syrian experiments in economic liberalization. Twice in Hafez al-Assad's time, in the early '70s, not long after he seized power, and in the mid-'80s, not long after his regime was shaken by religious and political unrest, he initiated an *infatih*, or an economic opening. In both instances, the objective of his reforms was to appease, and thereby to co-opt, the business classes, who were asked to accept greater economic benefits in exchange for their continued exclusion from political power. This was not democratization by means of the market; it was what political scientists refer to as "regime stabilization." Economic change was designed not to foster political change, but to prevent political change. Indeed, Syria's adventures in economic liberalization bring to mind the efforts of certain Asian governments to prove that there is no relation of entailment between economic progress and political progress.

Will the son repeal the father's system, in which Syrian civil society is thoroughly and oppressively penetrated by the Syrian state? There is no reason to think so. Will the son recoil from the father's colonialism in Lebanon? There is no reason to think so. (Hafez al-Assad died during a telephone conversation with the prime minister of Lebanon, who reported that his last words were, "Our destiny is to build a better future for our countries." He died lying.) And there is also no reason to think that the son will repeal the father's demand for a restoration of the 1967 border with Israel, and his refusal to entertain the possibility of normal relations with the Jewish state, which he persisted in calling "the Zionist entity." The legitimacy of the father's regime, insofar as it may be said to have enjoyed any legitimacy at all, was owed to his maximalism in his relations with Israel. He set out to uphold the Arab honor that Egypt and Jordan and the PLO had debased by recognizing Israel and allowing a spirit of decency into their dealings with it. For refusing to understand the morality of compromise, Assad was called a man of principle. He was also called a clever man, when in fact he was one of modern history's big losers.



ROB BABSONI

And what if Bashar al-Assad is persuaded by a dove in a chat room that Syria should treat with Israel? This hardly means that Israel should reward Syria for its entry into the real world by acceding to all its demands. The restoration of the 1967 border with Syria plainly flies in the face of Israeli safety. The Golan Heights are very high. They are a natural platform for aggression. And Hafez al-Assad was not prepared to consider the concession of even a few hundred yards of lakeshore at the Sea of Galilee.

Nor was he prepared to consider a deal that does not involve the modernization of the Syrian military by the United States. A sympathetic scholar of contemporary Syria observed a few years ago that "Syria's armed forces, by all international standards and comparisons, are in urgent need of modernization. Not only does most of the hardware used by Syria's ground forces represent the technology of the 1960s and 1970s, much of the material has also been cannibalized, and most of Syria's air force has been practically grounded for lack of spare parts. Peace, from a Syrian military perspective, will therefore primarily be an opportunity to spend on the rehabilitation of the armed forces." From an Israeli military perspective, however, peace must mean something different. What is the Israeli interest in exchanging a weak Syria without the Golan Heights for a strong Syria with the Golan Heights? And in this instance Israel's interests should be all that matter to Israel, because Syria, unlike the Palestinians, has no moral claim on Israel.

So please, no tears. About the life and the death of this cold man, we must think coldly. It is the only way to think responsibly. There is not much of a basis in reality for a sanguine view of Syria. Except that where there's death, there's hope. ■

THIS IS ONLY A TEST: Opponents of campaign finance reform are always careful to explain that they're not against reform per se; they're merely against certain kinds of reform. The right kind, they say over and over, is disclosure: requiring donors to identify themselves. As House Majority Whip Tom DeLay has put it, "It isn't that there's too much money involved. It is that there's not enough disclosure." Or, in the words of Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, "Perhaps the public good would be best served not by restricting donations to campaigns but by promoting them, with full disclosure." In fact, anti-reform conservatives considered disclosure the best kind of reform for another reason as well: It was the theoretical kind, having never come up for a serious congressional vote. But that changed last week when reformers proposed requiring that Section 527 advocacy groups—a new kind of organization that, due to a legal loophole, can independently spend money on campaigns without revealing its funding sources—admit who is paying their bills. The measure offered an almost laboratory-pure test of the sincerity of the anti-donation-limit, pro-disclosure conservatives. And the test reveals ... complete insincerity. Last week, 41 GOP senators—including Lott—voted to block an amendment requiring Section 527 groups to open their books. DeLay is busy plotting to quash an identical measure in the House. All at once disclosure has become a complicated matter in need of further study, or even a threat to the republic. Time to find a new fig leaf.

NEW DEMOCRATS: Once upon a time, the Democrats largely opposed the death penalty, and the Republicans largely supported it. And, unfortunately for the Democrats, Americans largely agreed with the Republicans. The Democrats, in other words, were morally brave and politically foolish. And then Bill Clinton came along and executed a retarded man at the height of the 1992 presidential campaign, and white Democrats abandoned their opposition to the death penalty in droves. They were no longer morally brave, but at least they were winning. Then something strange and wonderful happened. Prominent Republicans began to notice a feature of the death penalty that Democrats had been noticing, and getting clobbered for noticing, for years: It's hideously unfair. And so Democrats celebrated, because finally they had political cover—they could safely express their own reservations about the death penalty because Pat Robertson and George Will and even George W. Bush (sort of) had done the same. Right? Actually, wrong. In the past several weeks, pro-death-penalty Democrats have said almost nothing at all. In fact, there are even signs that some may try to turn the tables and do to the GOP what the GOP did to them a decade ago. In New Hampshire, for instance, on May 18, the Republican-controlled legislature passed a bill to abolish the death penalty in the state, and Democratic Governor Jeanne Shaheen (a potential veep choice) vetoed it. The man who may choose her as his running mate has been almost as bad. Asked by the editorial board of *The New York Times* this week to clarify his death-

penalty position, Gore said: "I have insisted upon certain criteria before I'm willing to support the death penalty. But where those criteria are present I have always supported it." Ten years ago, when criticizing the death penalty was politically impossible, such an answer might have been understandable. Today, there's really no excuse.

UTTERLY DELIGHTFUL: Neil Bernstein, Pat Buchanan's personable press secretary, thought his boss had a problem. While the candidate was an "utterly delightful person" in private conversation, Bernstein explained, he was perceived in public as a mean-spirited ideologue. Bernstein wanted to exhibit Buchanan in "lighter, softer venues," like "The Tonight Show With Jay Leno," that could bring out this lighter side of him. Bernstein objected to the "defensive" and "us versus them" mentality that the campaign fostered. After repeatedly arguing this point, Bernstein was fired on June 9 by Buchanan's campaign manager, his sister Bay. Bernstein is now ready to consider a deeper reason for his failure—that there is a "similarity between the defensiveness that goes into [Buchanan's] protectionism and isolationism and the mindset the campaign is run on." You don't say.

COMING NEXT, AMNESTY'S REPORT ON D-DAY: Given Slobodan Milosevic's miserable human rights record, it might seem odd that his regime was peddling an Amnesty International report last week. "It is quite just and quite deserving of attention," Borislav Milosevic, Sloba's brother and Yugoslavia's ambassador to Moscow, said of the report. Then again, the report isn't about the Milosevic regime's human rights abuses—it's about NATO's. In the 74-page brief, titled "'Collateral Damage' or Unlawful Killings? Violations of Laws of War by NATO during Operation Allied Force," Amnesty accuses NATO of having violated international humanitarian law by targeting "civilian objects" during its Kosovo intervention last year. Among the "civilian objects" that Amnesty cites: two bridges; the Chinese Embassy in Belgrade; and the headquarters of Serbian State Television and Radio (RTS), the bombing of which Amnesty deems a "war crime." Alas, in compiling this list of NATO's misdeeds, Amnesty doesn't bother to assess NATO's motives: the bridges were bombed because destroying Serb infrastructure was one of the only ways to pressure Milosevic to stop his ethnic-cleansing campaign in Kosovo; the bombing of the Chinese Embassy, for which the United States has repeatedly apologized, was the result of a mapping error; and the RTS was targeted because Milosevic was using state-run media as a propaganda machine. Amnesty nicely avoids these moral complications with this disclaimer: "Amnesty International takes no position on the political issues surrounding the status of Kosovo. The organization does not judge whether recourse to force by anyone is justified or not and therefore takes no position on the legal or moral basis for NATO's military intervention against [Yugoslavia]." And yet, without judging the moral purpose for which a military campaign is launched, how can you possibly make a serious moral

judgment about the damage it inflicts? You can't, and Amnesty didn't, and it should know better.

FORGIVE AND DON'T FORGET: With a very public kiss-and-make-up session last month, it seemed that Arizona Senator John McCain had officially forgiven Texas Governor George W. Bush for his nasty primary campaign. But, ever the straight talker, McCain isn't letting Bush off the hook that easily. Last week, in a mass e-mail message to his backers, McCain tried to rally support for legislation requiring political organizations known as Section 527s to disclose the names of their donors. As evidence of the mischief these organizations, which take advantage of a tax-code loophole to protect their funders' identities, can make, McCain cited this particular example: "One '527' group which might ring a bell to you is the so-called 'Republicans for Clean Air.' As you might recall, this was the group which viciously attacked me with millions of dollars in negative ads during the Super Tuesday primaries. No one knew who this group was, or where their money was coming from. Yet every day, hour after hour, they pounded me over the airwaves with attack after false attack." And, just in case it was unclear on whose behalf those attacks were made, McCain continued: "Here's

how the Associated Press described the New York attack ads: 'At crucial moments in the presidential campaign, George W. Bush has benefited from millions of dollars in advertising paid for by mysterious groups and secret donors.' We can't wait for McCain's convention speech.

ADDITIONAL HELP: In his article last week ("Temporary Help," June 19), John B. Judis characterized the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, the Programmer's Guild, the American Engineering Association, and the AFL-CIO as "suspicious of immigration in general." That is too broad. They have traditionally been "suspicious" of high-tech immigration, but not necessarily of immigration in general.

NOT A MOMENT TOO SOON: We are delighted to announce the publication by Farrar, Straus & Giroux of *The Moral Obligation To Be Intelligent: Selected Essays of Lionel Trilling*, edited and with an introduction by Leon Wieseltier. These humane and rigorous essays on the moral history of literature and culture have been out of print for many years, but here they are again, to rattle the general euphoria. Perfect reading for a summer of "variousness, possibility, complexity, and difficulty." ■

V I N T ' S W E E K



Ophthalmologist, heal thyself.

Junior League

By DANNA HARMAN and ALUF BENN

OVER THE YEARS, Israelis have debated among themselves the relationship between succession and peace. On one side were those who believed the younger generation of Arab leaders would be more flexible and open-minded. On the other were those who considered it best to clinch a deal with the old guard, who, having waged war, had greater authority to make peace. Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, it seemed, subscribed to the second school of thought.

"The leaders who were there when their states were being established are the ones who can take the big decisions today," Barak said in an interview with *The Jerusalem Post* last September. "[Syrian President Hafez al-] Assad is the symbol of the revolution [in Syria], he molded the state. Therefore [he] holds the sort of authority and perspective that allows him to make the hard decisions." Members of the successors' generation, Barak argued, would likely need to spend years consolidating and honing their power before they felt confident enough to make the bold moves needed for peace. "Saying 'Let's wait, maybe the next one to come will be better' is something of a cop-out, and a bit naïve," the prime minister concluded back then.

He was right. But, since Assad's death last Saturday, many Israeli officials seem to have forgotten Barak's words. Chief of Military Intelligence Major General Amos Malka and Chief of Staff Lieutenant General Shaul Mofaz have expressed hope that the late dictator's son Bashar will bring stability and quiet not only to Syria but to the region as a whole. President Ezer Weizman has stated matter-of-factly, "Logically speaking . . . younger Bashar is bound to be better than his father." Even Barak has tried to distance himself from his past skepticism, stressing that he was "not able to predict what this death means for the peace process." Meanwhile, officials in his office say they "had heard good things" about Bashar, whom they call "modern" and "honorable."

The optimism stems largely from Bashar's biography. A 35-year-old bachelor and fluent English speaker, Bashar, after attending medical school in Damascus, moved to England in 1992 to specialize in ophthalmology. While in the West, he developed certain Western tastes, including an affinity for computer technology and the music of Phil Collins. And after he was summoned back to Syria in 1994—on the occasion of his older brother Basil's death in a car accident—Bashar displayed what seemed to be Western tendencies. He supported an anti-corruption campaign in his father's government. He

introduced a new computer system at Damascus University. And, most famously, he overcame the objections of his country's security establishment and brought the Internet, in a supervised format, to Syria.

All this is taken as evidence that Bashar, eager to advance his country economically and endear himself to the West, will, en route to Washington, follow the road that passes through Jerusalem. But, as the experience of other young Arab leaders shows, a Western education and a desire for economic development don't automatically translate into warm relations with Israel. Indeed, in some ways, those factors can actually prompt new-generation leaders—concerned about establishing their Islamic bona fides and dependent on security forces and intellectual elites who often hold dim views of Israel—to take a hard line against the Jewish state.

CONSIDER PRESIDENT HOSNI MUBARAK of Egypt. Although neither quite as young nor quite as Western when he succeeded Anwar Sadat in 1981, he resembled Bashar in that he succeeded a strong, long-serving leader who had made overtures toward peace. But, while Mubarak kept strictly to the letter of his predecessor's peace treaty with Israel, he—unlike Sadat—stubbornly refused to visit the country. When he finally came to Jerusalem in 1995 for former Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin's funeral, Mubarak insisted that he was not visiting officially but merely paying respects to a friend. Under Mubarak, who was perpetually wary of the hard-liners who assassinated Sadat, Egyptian-Israeli relations degenerated into their current "cold peace." Israeli businessmen are often unwelcome in Cairo, scientists and scholars have been excluded from international conferences there, and the Egyptian press remains a hotbed of anti-Zionist fervor.

Then there are the young kings of Jordan and Morocco, who ascended their respective thrones following the deaths of their fathers last year. The older generation, King Hussein of Jordan and King Hassan of Morocco, had won a special place in the hearts of Israelis as pioneers of moderation and openness. Hussein was seen as a noble neighbor who, on one occasion, even prostrated himself before the parents of seven Israeli schoolgirls killed by a renegade Jordanian soldier. Hassan "adopted" Israel's large community of Moroccan-born Jews and mediated talks between Israel and other Arab leaders, like Sadat.

Yet Jordan's King Abdullah—with his British mother, his education at Sandhurst Royal Military College and Georgetown University (complete with Jewish professors), and his perfect English accent—has allowed his country's relations with Israel to worsen, partly owing to an effort to improve Jordan's relations with the Arab world. Although he moved swiftly, upon ascension, to travel to the Gulf countries and Syria, he waited more than a year to visit Israel. Even then, the jaunt next door lasted but four hours and took place in the remote resort town of Eilat. What's more, many of the planned bilateral projects resulting from Jordan's 1994 peace treaty with Israel—such as the building of an airport in Aqaba—have stalled under Abdullah. Jordan's intellectual elite, which fiercely opposed normalization with Israel, has grown more outspoken during the young king's rule—some

DANNA HARMAN is diplomatic correspondent for *The Jerusalem Post*. ALUF BENN is diplomatic correspondent for *Ha'aretz*.

say with the acquiescence of Abdullah, who, with his Western pedigree and imperfect command of Arabic, is reluctant to criticize them.

Morocco's King Mohammed—who holds a doctorate from the University of Nice and, before he put on his crown, enjoyed Western pleasures like clubbing in European discotheques and shopping on New York's Fifth Avenue—has similarly neglected relations with Israel. Again, the reason appears to be that Mohammed, insecure about his reputation for being Westernized, is reluctant to take on the general anti-Israel sentiment in his country. He has yet to host Barak at the royal palace and has all but taken Morocco out of the peace process, even as he struggles to turn his feudal kingdom into a modern economy and bring in foreign investment.

Bashar is in an even more difficult position vis-à-vis Israel than his generational colleagues. Hafez Assad left his son a complex legacy. On one hand, like Sadat and Hussein, he flirted with the peace process. On the other hand, unlike the other leaders, he never finished the job: even after Israel agreed to withdraw from all of the Golan Heights save a narrow strip of land on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Assad rejected the offer as insufficient.

Assad's intransigence led Barak to withdraw unilaterally from Lebanon, a move that endangered Assad's strategic achievement of turning Lebanon into a Syrian puppet state. Once the Israelis were out, unprecedented voices emerged from Beirut calling for the Syrians to follow suit. Bashar, on top of suppressing domestic resentment against his minority Alawite dynasty, will have to contend with these demands as well.

Only after he has mastered the power struggles in Damascus and Beirut will Bashar be able to turn his attention to Israel—assuming he even wants to. And there is evidence that he may not. Five days before his father's death, Bashar gave an interview to the Egyptian opposition weekly *Al-Ushu*. In it, he said that for Syria peace “means forcing Israel to accept a full withdrawal to the June 4, 1967, border as a basic precondition in order for the Syrian side to accept the peace process.” This World Wide Web fan, it seems, is at least as tough as his father when it comes to links with Israel. ■

Jerusalem Dispatch

Aim Low

By YOSHI KLEIN HALEVI

VIEWED TOGETHER, THE death of Syrian President Hafez al-Assad last week and Israel's withdrawal from Lebanon just weeks earlier offer the Israeli left and right a rare opportunity for common humility. Assad's passing, after all, ended the left-wing fantasy of a new Middle

East fashioned from Israeli concessions, just as the Lebanon withdrawal ended the right-wing fantasy of a new Middle East imposed by Israeli power. Prime Minister Ehud Barak's self-inflicted peace timetable and Likud leader Ariel Sharon's Lebanon strategy were both motivated by an arrogant optimism that placed the future of the Arab-Israeli conflict entirely in Israeli hands. All that was required was Israeli resolve, on the battlefield or at the negotiating table, and a more rational Middle East would emerge.

In a less self-righteous political culture, Israeli left-wingers would be wondering aloud how they could have so badly misread Assad. Before the Syrian dictator cut peace talks short in March, the Israeli left felt certain he was obsessed with ensuring that his son Bashar would receive the Golan Heights and American-backed prosperity as his inheritance—which, after all, is what any Israeli peace activist would have wanted were he in Assad's place. Left-wingers would also be asking themselves why Barak squandered his precious first year in office pursuing the Assad delusion and why he undermined his agenda for domestic reform by choosing as his coalition partner the extortionist and theocratic Shas rather than the Zionist and democratic Likud, on the assumption that Shas, unlike Likud, could be bribed into supporting a deal with Syria. Finally, they would ask what would have happened had Barak actually succeeded in handing over the Golan—and one-third of Israel's sources of water—to a totalitarian dynasty that may now face a difficult succession.

THEY DIDN'T ASK because Israeli left-wingers share with their right-wing counterparts a contempt for reality and a near-mystical belief in the power of Israeli will to change the Middle East. Even after the intifada and Oslo, the religious right still believes that if only Israel recovers its resolve, the biblical borders can be salvaged. Theodor Herzl, after all, insisted, “If you will it, it is no dream”—and that desperate self-confidence was responsible for Zionism's improbable successes. But when that faith is projected onto our neighbors, the result is often self-delusion, a reductionist fantasy that ignores the region's own logic and agenda.

The morning after Assad's death, the ideological optimists were already making new pronouncements. Maybe now, they said, with Assad senior out of the way, a new generation of Syrians freed from historical enmities would make peace with Israel. Bashar, after all, was educated in the West and loves the Internet. Of course, this view directly contradicts the optimists' earlier argument for the urgency of a peace agreement: that only Hafez Assad would be strong enough to make the necessary compromises, because his successor would be preoccupied with political survival. But Israelis don't listen to arguments—sometimes not even their own. Even if the optimists are right and Bashar does try to modernize Syria, the result will probably resemble Iran, where relative moderates protect their domestic reforms by remaining no less anti-Zionist than the hard-liners.

Assad's legacy from the grave, as Palestinian negotiator Saeb Erekat put it, is that no Arab leader can now afford to settle for less than a full return to the borders of June 4, 1967. That message is reinforced by Hezbollah's anti-Israeli

YOSHI KLEIN HALEVI is a senior writer at *The Jerusalem Report*.

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steadfastness in Lebanon: U.N. officials are marking the Lebanese-Israeli border to the precise meter, even dividing the forlorn village of Rajar between the two countries.

But the legacy of Assad is most apparent in the Palestinian leadership's growing resolve not to concede any part of the West Bank. Barak confidant Haim Ramon has warned the Palestinians that Assad's real legacy is that without compromise there is no peace. Yet while Barak tries to prepare the Israeli public for traumatic concessions, noting that tens of thousands of settlers will be uprooted in a final-status deal, Yasir Arafat reassures his public that there will be no Palestinian compromises. Even some Labor politicians and left-leaning op-ed writers are beginning to suspect that Arafat's insistence on the 1967 borders is not a negotiating tactic but a final offer.

Yet if a return to the precise 1967 lines proved unrealistic in the Golan—where Syria was demanding a strip of shoreline on the Sea of Galilee that its army had seized and then lost during the Six Day War—it is inconceivable in the West Bank. No proper West Bank border has ever been drawn, because a Palestinian state never existed; and 200,000 Israelis now live there, in part because of three decades of Palestinian refusal to negotiate.

It's not that there aren't any Palestinians willing to compromise. Barak's offer to withdraw from 90 percent of the territories is itself based largely on a plan devised by Israeli Justice Minister Yossi Beilin and Arafat's deputy, Abu Mazen. Yet the momentum among Palestinians and in the Arab world generally is toward not the Abu Mazen model but the Assad and Hezbollah model of no compromise.

Barak may try to avoid an impasse by offering the Palestinians most of the West Bank—80 percent immediately and at least another ten percent gradually, according to Israeli press reports—while deferring a final-status settlement on Jerusalem and the refugees. The Israeli public would probably accept such a far-reaching withdrawal, but only if it ends Palestinian demands and results in peace. Yielding most of the territory and forcibly evacuating settlements without ending the conflict would strip Israel of its bargaining power and merely defer the next explosion.

If Barak accepts that deal, he will find himself with exactly the kind of government he dreaded all along: exclusively left-wing and secular, and dependent on the Arab parties for survival. The Jewish public increasingly mistrusts Arab Israeli politicians, who in recent months have openly backed Hezbollah. Azmi Bishara, head of the National Democratic Alliance, even held a pro-Hezbollah victory celebration. Barak knows he can't sell a West Bank withdrawal to voters if his government depends on Azmi Bishara.

Barak could call new elections and, given the lack of an attractive right-wing opponent, he would probably win. (The only figure on the right whom polls place even with Barak is Benjamin Netanyahu, who is preoccupied with a police investigation into corruption charges.) But another election victory wouldn't do Barak much good; he would likely confront the same parliamentary constellation.

Meanwhile, Israel faces unprecedented security dilemmas. Hezbollah sits on its northern border, and a Palestinian state is likely to emerge without Israel receiving peace in return.

Palestinian leaders are warning that if Israel doesn't agree to withdraw to the 1967 borders by September 13, when Arafat has said he will declare a Palestinian state, demonstrators will march, Zimbabwe-style, into settlements and Jewish neighborhoods in East Jerusalem. The recent scenes in Damascus of men piercing themselves in mourning and parading their bloody wounds through the streets are a reminder of the orchestrated passions our neighbors can release—and of the limits of Israel's ability to transform the Middle East.

If the security situation deteriorates, Barak has an option of last resort: a national unity government with the Likud. Such a government would concede the impossibility of definitively ending the Arab-Israeli conflict, at least any time soon, while accepting responsibility for minimizing its intensity. A unity government would rely on deterrence as much as territorial concessions to maintain stability. And, by uniting Israel's democratic and Zionist forces, it would refocus attention on the domestic issues that won Barak the election but which he has since ignored—especially containing ultra-Orthodox power and addressing the glaring gap between rich and poor. It would be a government without great expectations, inward-looking and aware of its limits: a government of national humility. ■

Harare Dispatch Landslide

By ANDREW MELDRUM

“THE CONDITIONS FOR credible democratic elections do not exist in Zimbabwe at this time,” the National Democratic Institute, an American election-monitoring group, declared last month. Amnesty International agrees. And it's not hard to see why. Ever since Robert Mugabe's draft constitution—which would have further entrenched his powers—was rejected in a national referendum in February, the Zimbabwean president has gone to extraordinarily brutal lengths to make sure he isn't humiliated again in the parliamentary elections scheduled for June 24 and 25. Such brutal lengths, in fact, that many outside observers have written the elections off, conceding that they will bolster Mugabe's regime as intended. But these observers are probably wrong. In their remarkable struggle against their president, the people of Zimbabwe next week will likely strike another significant blow at the polls.

Press coverage has centered on Mugabe's attacks on white farmers. But white farmers aren't his ultimate target; Mugabe is really after the overwhelmingly black party they support, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). In the countryside, where 65 percent of Zimbabweans live, thugs from the ruling ZANU-PF party have gone from village to

ANDREW MELDRUM, southern Africa correspondent for *The Guardian*, is a frequent contributor to *The Economist*.

village telling black residents that their ballots won't be secret and that those who vote for the MDC will be killed. Villagers suspected of backing the opposition are often beaten, and their homes are often burned. Public attacks on teachers (who are thought to disproportionately support the MDC) have forced the closing of 250 rural schools. Government hospitals and clinics have been warned not to treat MDC supporters.

In Zimbabwe's cities, the story is much the same. Government backers have firebombed the homes of MDC candidates and supporters in Harare's townships; a bouncer at a township nightclub was beaten to death for wearing an MDC T-shirt. In the resort town of Kariba, Mugabe supporters dragged five MDC officials from work and beat them, killing two. In Harare's Budiriro township, ZANU-PF thugs turned a doctor's office into a torture center where scores of residents were abused with electric wires. The police have taken little action. All told, Amani Trust, a Zimbabwean human rights group, has documented more than 6,000 incidents of serious violence. At least 30 people have been killed.

AND YET THE June 24 and 25 elections whose outcome this violence is supposed to ensure may actually be the beginning of the end for Mugabe. With a platform of sound economics and respect for civil liberties, the MDC has garnered the support of labor unions, lawyers, church groups, and civic organizations. Last weekend, the MDC and ZANU-PF held competing rallies in Harare. Although 4,000 people turned out for the ZANU-PF rally—thanks in no small part to the free transportation, free T-shirts, free hats, free buns and soft drinks, and a free performance by the popular band Lubumbashi Stars—it was a listless crowd. Meanwhile, at the MDC rally, held at the edge of town, 4,000 supporters, without the lure of free handouts or music, came on foot to listen to a slate of speakers. Once safely inside the rally, many shed sweaters and jackets to reveal MDC T-shirts. The crowd cheered lustily when one speaker declared, "It is now or never. Now is the time for us to build a better Zimbabwe for our children."

To that end, the MDC has managed to do something no opposition party has done since Zimbabwe gained independence in 1980: It has fielded candidates for all 120 elected seats in parliament. That feat is even more remarkable given Mugabe's intimidation campaign. Consider the case of one MDC candidate, Sekai Holland, a women's rights activist from the Mberengwa district in the Midlands province. Four days before the deadline for registering as a candidate, police barged into a U.N.-sponsored seminar on women in politics that Holland was leading and hauled her away at gunpoint; she was held for four nights without being charged. Thirty of her supporters were also detained, many after being beaten by ZANU-PF backers. Finally, after an Amnesty International worker demanded her release, Holland was freed on the day of the registration deadline. After three of her supporters (whose houses were later torched) gathered the requisite ten signatures from registered voters and assembled the paperwork, Holland, in the same clothes she had been wearing five days earlier, filed as an official candidate.

With its full slate of candidates, the MDC seems poised to

win a significant number of parliamentary seats. The party appears unassailably strong in Zimbabwe's cities: it's likely to pick up 40 seats in Harare, Bulawayo, and other urban centers. But even some rural areas, traditionally ZANU-PF's base, may go the MDC's way. The southern provinces of Matabeleland North and South—home of MDC Vice President Gibson Sibanda and a hotbed of anti-Mugabe sentiment—could provide the MDC with another twelve seats in parliament. And the eastern province of Manicaland, whose residents overwhelmingly voted against Mugabe's draft constitution in February, could yield another twelve seats.

The MDC, in other words, could win as many as 64 seats: a majority of the elected seats in parliament. And, while Mugabe appoints 30 additional members of parliament, a strong MDC showing on Election Day would likely create tremendous pressure, both domestic and international, for Mugabe not to thwart democracy by loading his 30 appointments with staunch ZANU-PF supporters. And, even if ZANU-PF retains a slight majority, a strong parliamentary opposition might tempt members of the ruling party—many of whom have grown increasingly disenchanted with Mugabe—to cross the floor to vote with the MDC on controversial issues, such as land reform or Zimbabwe's disastrous war in Congo. Mugabe might well find himself with a hostile parliament. Indeed, if he lost some key votes, it's even possible that he might be forced to resign before his presidential term ends in 2002; such setbacks would certainly make him less likely to stand for another six-year term at age 78.

There's a risk Mugabe could continue to rule by decree, as he has done recently. And sustaining such rule after the elections might require a full crackdown by the police, the army, the Central Intelligence Organization, and pro-government "war veterans." But such moves might also trigger a mass uprising. Either way, if the MDC does as well as seems likely on June 24 and 25, Mugabe will be in a bind. His days in power may finally, and blessedly, be numbered. ■

Montenegro Dispatch Ball and Chain

By MASHA GESSEN

IT IS NOT often that the names of competing political parties perfectly reflect the alternatives they represent. Yet that was the case here on June 11, when the residents of Montenegro's two largest cities went to the polls to choose between the Coalition for a Better Life and the Coalition for Yugoslavia. You'd think it would be an easy choice. But Montenegrins are well-aware—after watching Croatia, Bosnia, and Kosovo—that spurning Yugoslavia can have traumatic consequences. That realization, plus a population genuinely schizophrenic about its

MASHA GESSEN is chief correspondent at *Itogi*, the Russian partner to *Newsweek*.

ethnic identity, helps explain why the two cities voted in different ways—and why the simmering four-year conflict in Montenegro may soon boil over into another Balkan war.

Montenegro, once a treasured vacation oasis, is all that stands between the Yugoslav federation and the dustbin of history. With its tiny year-round population of 600,000, Montenegro is Serbia's only remaining partner in a federation that once included six republics. Four split off (Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia, and Slovenia)—all but one (Macedonia) following a war that Serbia fought with Montenegro's aid. Romantic Montenegrins insist they supported Slobodan Milosevic's wars because, traditionally, they are warriors; cynics point out that, for a tiny republic with a seaport and mountainous borders, wars offer unlimited opportunities to profit from smuggling.

But after the 1995 Dayton peace accords, which significantly diminished both Serbia's warrior stature and the smuggling possibilities, Montenegro began to slowly drift away from its big brother. The process accelerated after Serbia was humiliated again in the Kosovo war, the first conflict it waged without Montenegrin support. As one Montenegrin political scientist puts it, "Now Yugoslavia is like a bad marriage in which one spouse constantly beats the other. The wife has locked herself in her room, but she hasn't left yet, though she intends to."

Actually, things are further along than that: the wife has already sent the husband a formal separation agreement. Last August, Montenegro proposed a new plan for coexistence with Serbia, whereby Yugoslavia would essentially be turned into a loose confederation. The federal government has not officially responded—which, considering hubby's propensity for violence, is not a good sign—but Montenegro has continued the separation process anyway. With the help of Western aid agencies, Montenegro has been refashioning itself as a democracy. It brought in the American Bar Association to redraft its penal and civil codes, it began privatizing industries, and it has even taken a stand against organized crime, last year extraditing 29 of Italy's most wanted mafiosi.

But, when you're in the Balkans, becoming a Western democracy isn't that easy. Privatization has stalled. And, while the West has rewarded Montenegro's good intentions with financial assistance, times are still tough. For nine years now, the Balkan wars have scared off tourists; on the first day of June this year, the island of Ada Bajana, once Europe's premier nudist resort, boasted four sunbathers and twice as many cows. Last fall, when Serbian authorities reignited inflation by overprinting currency, Montenegro made the deutsche mark its official currency. Belgrade shot back by effectively severing relations with Montenegrin banks.

"THE YUGOSLAV FEDERATION is dead," chirps Milka Tadic, editor of Montenegro's largest independent political weekly, the *Monitor* (circulation 10,000). "The only federal institution present on Montenegrin soil is the Yugoslav army." And that's the problem. Montenegro is trying to secede from a country, Yugoslavia, that does not have a great track record of peaceful secessions. And the presence on Montenegrin soil of some 10,000 Yugoslav

troops plus about 1,000 members of the recently formed military police forces, opposed by between 15,000 and 20,000 local police, suggests that Montenegro's experience is unlikely to be much different.

And it's not just that Serbia won't let Montenegro leave. Unlike the Croats, Bosnians, and Kosovars before them, Montenegrins seem conflicted—not only about whether they want to secede but, more broadly, about who they are. In opinion polls, about one-quarter of Montenegrins say they think of themselves as Serbs; the majority call themselves Montenegrins, but one-third of these say they are Montenegrins of Serb provenance. The language formerly known as Serbo-Croatian—successfully renamed Serbian, Croatian, or Bosnian elsewhere—is known here simply as "ours." The results of this week's local elections, in which Montenegro's capital, Podgorica, voted for the ruling Coalition for a Better Life, while the second-largest city, Herceg Novi, went for the Coalition for Yugoslavia, reflect the national ambivalence. Opinion polls show that 36 percent of Montenegrins support independence, 23 percent prefer the proposed loose confederation, and 28 percent think Yugoslavia should remain intact. An additional five percent believe the federal structure should be abolished and Montenegro should, in effect, become part of the greater Serbia of Milosevic's dreams. The latter third, who want to stick with Yugoslavia, have kept Montenegrin president Milo Djukanovic from making a hasty break—say, by scheduling a referendum on Montenegrin independence before the end of the year, as he once vowed.

Djukanovic knows that while the Yugoslav constitution guarantees Montenegro's right to secede by means of a referendum, Slovenia, Bosnia, and Croatia had that right, too—and it didn't do them much good. Even without a referendum, conflict could erupt anyway—for instance, in October, when Yugoslavia is supposed to hold federal elections. Montenegro holds half the seats in the upper house of parliament. And, although the chamber has not functioned for the last two years because of Milosevic's refusal to recognize the elected Montenegrin delegation, the near-certain refusal by Montenegrin authorities to even take part in the federal elections this year could spark a crisis.

Preparations for just such a crisis are already under way. Last month, the Yugoslav army commander in Montenegro put his troops on full battle alert. And, since last fall, Milosevic's cronies have been organizing pro-Yugoslavia rallies by local clans, an ancient form of Serbian social organization that had essentially faded from existence in Montenegro until Milosevic's henchmen miraculously rejuvenated it.

And what is the West doing about all this? Not a lot. NATO wants to avoid another intervention in the Balkans. No less important, the U.N. solution to the Kosovo conflict (if you can call it a solution) rests on the existence of a Yugoslav federation, within which Kosovo would eventually become an autonomous province. Without Montenegro, there is no federation and thus no U.N. solution. Of course, one could argue that there is not really a federation with Montenegro, either, since international organizations have never recognized Yugoslavia in its current form. But that untidy fact doesn't seem to enter into the West's thinking. And so Montenegro remains locked in a room, waiting for the beating to come. ■

Buchanan 1, Reform Party 0. Unhostile Takeover

By JOHN B. JUDIS

LANGHORNE, PENNSYLVANIA

ROSS PEROT'S REFORM PARTY is about to do something no third party has done in a century: transcend its founder. And it will be thanks to Pat Buchanan. Although Buchanan won't give either major candidate a scare in this year's presidential election, he'll probably line up enough disenchanted social conservatives, blue-collar workers threatened by imports, and disillusioned independents to win 7,000,000 votes. That would give him five percent of the popular vote—enough to qualify the Reform Party for federal money again in 2004, as well as an automatic place on the ballot in many states.

But the Reform Party will pay a price for survival. And that price will be Buchanan's lasting influence. "What you have seen—there is no doubt about it—is a Buchananization of the Reform Party," the candidate told me on the eve of the Pennsylvania party's June 10 convention. He's absolutely right. Under Buchanan's influence, the Reform Party is drifting from the socially tolerant, good-government identity of its infancy to a darker place occupied in the late '60s by George Wallace's American Independent Party and in the nineteenth century by the Know-Nothings. Buchanan is bringing into the party new members from the Christian Coalition and hard-line GOP caucuses like Missouri's Republican Assembly, and in so doing he is splitting state organizations and expunging the party's old guard.

Nobody understands

this better than the old guard itself. Veterans of the Perot campaigns are apoplectic, and they blame Buchanan himself—not merely, they say, because he is betraying Perot's vision but because he is betraying the promises he made to them when he decided to run last fall. "Here is somebody you invite over to your house," complains Russell Verney, the former chairman of the Reform Party, "and the first thing they do is start evicting you." Verney and the others are right about what is happening, but they are letting themselves off too easily in their explanations why. In truth, Buchanan didn't steal the Reform Party's soul. He purchased it, using his name recognition as currency. And it was Perot veterans like Verney who presided over the transaction, out of sheer desperation to survive.

Successful third-party candidacies depend on two things: a charismatic leader and a collage of troubling issues that the major parties are determined either to ignore or to view one-sidedly. In 1968, for example, Wallace focused his inflammatory oratory on racial integration and government spending on minorities, expressing an anger many Americans felt but neither party would articulate. In 1992, Perot played a similar role—channeling popular frustration with economic decline, political corruption, and government incompetence. Many politicians had spoken to one or the other of these concerns. Democrats, for instance, railed against corporate greed, campaign finance abuse, and Ja-

pan's unfair trade practices, while Republicans attacked budget deficits and "big government." But no one combined them and summed them up as powerfully as Perot did.

But while Perot, like Wallace, tapped into popular frustrations, he had one major advantage over his third-party predecessor. Whereas Wallace was avowedly a politician of the extreme right, Perot hailed from the political center. He opposed the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), but he was not anti-immigrant. He was pro-choice and had a commendable record on civil rights and education in Texas. If not for his erratic personality, he might have actually challenged for the presidency in November.

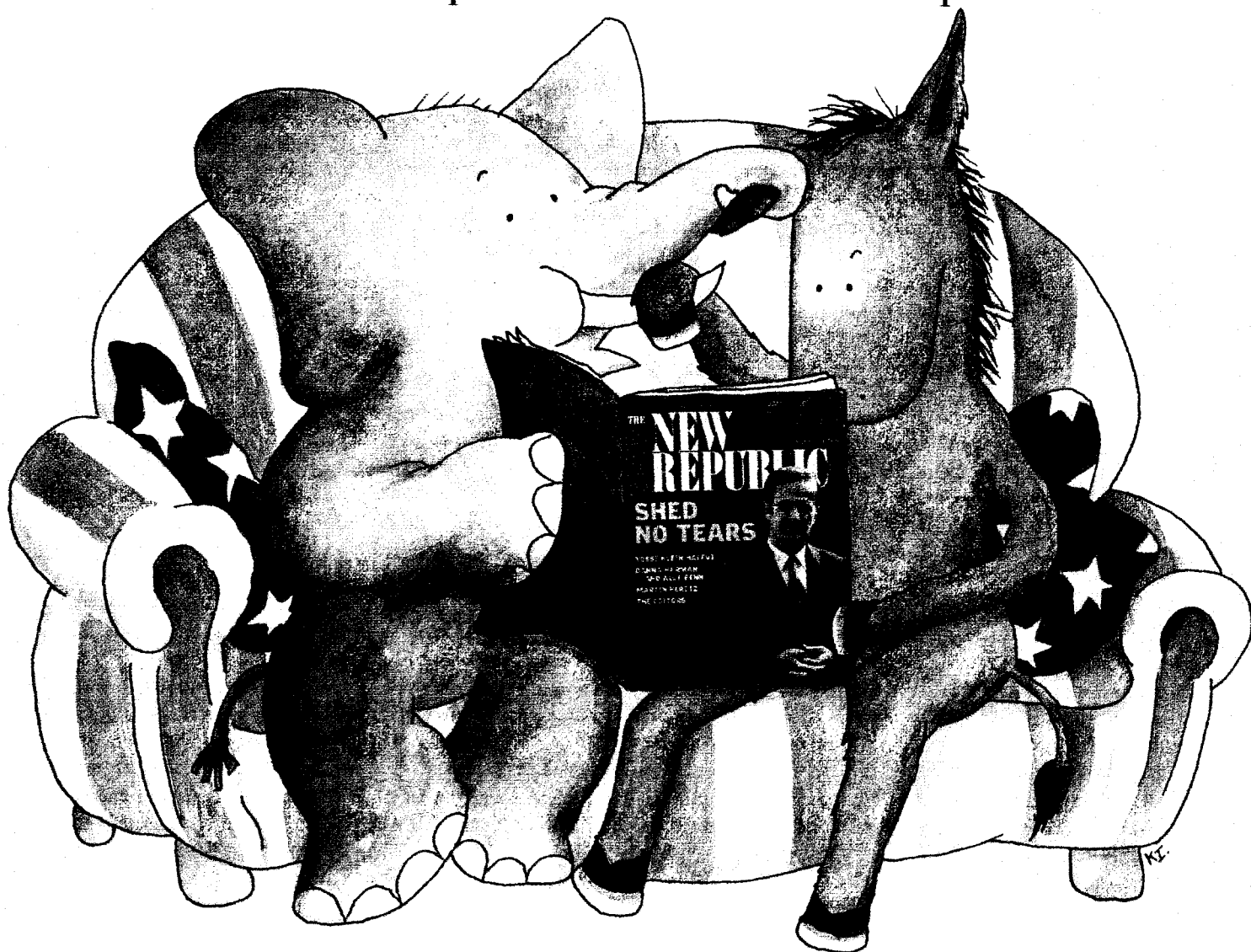


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In 1996, even though he had lost half his issues, Perot was still a recognizable political presence. America's economic rebound and Japan's nosedive undercut his message of economic nationalism. But Perot could still run on a centrist platform of government reform, campaign finance regulation, balanced budgets, and the rescue of Social Security and Medicare. With the Clinton administration plunged into scandal and the Republicans identified with corporate special-interest groups, this set of issues was sufficiently distinctive to garner Perot eight percent of the vote. If the debate commission, which is controlled by the two parties, had not excluded him, Perot could have won double that and earned his party millions of dollars more this year.

Further proof of the Reform Party's enduring appeal came in 1998, when Jesse Ventura won the Minnesota governorship on a similar reform platform (minus the economic nationalism). Ventura's success appeared to demonstrate that if the Reform Party could field credible—and, even better, highly original—candidates, it could establish itself as the party of government reform. Even if it never supplanted either of the major parties, it could substantially influence them—as the campaign-reform-oriented campaigns of Bill Bradley and John McCain seemed to suggest.

AND YET THE last two years have been, by any standard, difficult ones for the Reform Party. Romantics like to envisage third parties as bottom-up institutions whose local success provides the foundation for their national prominence. In fact, the opposite is historically true: third parties have depended on presidential elections for their success. In presidential elections, third parties can exploit openings created when the major parties, driven by their constituency groups, ignore or slight important issues—in ways that local Democratic and Republican candidates, more in tune with local idiosyncrasy, rarely do. As a result, third parties tend to flounder between presidential-election years.

That is what happened to the Reform Party. After 1996, most state Reform Party organizations outside Minnesota atrophied. In 1998, the party ran House candidates in just 16 states and Senate candidates in only eight, with no candidate getting even two percent of the vote. In Iowa, when its gubernatorial candidate failed to receive two percent of the vote, the Reform Party lost its ballot status. In Pennsylvania, one of the original Reform Party states, members couldn't even gather the 36,000 signatures necessary to get their gubernatorial and Senate candidates on the ballot.

And so, as the 2000 presidential election approached, party leaders knew they desperately needed a presidential candidate who could inspire the party's base and secure its funding and ballot access. The obvious choice was Ventura, but, while he made no secret of his desire to run in 2004, he insisted on keeping his pledge to Minnesota voters not to run in 2000. Ventura, in turn, tried to convince former Connecticut Governor Lowell Weicker and millionaire Donald Trump to run. But the Reform Party leaders in Dallas, locked in a bitter, issueless power struggle with Ventura over who would control the party, wanted nothing to do with anyone the Min-

nesota governor recruited. They began frantically casting about for a candidate of their own.

ENTER BUCHANAN. BY last September, he was growing amenable to quitting the GOP. His Republican presidential campaign had fizzled. In contrast to 1992 and 1996, in 2000 he had to share the social conservative vote—with Gary Bauer, Steve Forbes, and Alan Keyes. Only his protectionism distinguished him, and the economic boom had left most Republicans indifferent to it.

With its \$12.6 million in federal campaign funding, the Reform Party offered Buchanan a chance to sustain his cause and his presidential ambitions. So he began meeting with Verney and Pat Choate, Perot's 1996 vice presidential candidate. They, in turn, arranged meetings with other Reform Party leaders: Donna Donovan from Connecticut and Patricia Benjamin from New Jersey, as well as left-wing-sect leader Lenora Fulani, who had influence in New York and several other Eastern and Midwestern states. In October, Buchanan agreed to run, and the Reform Party leaders agreed to support him.

Verney and the others weren't blind to their ideological differences with Buchanan. Verney is a former New Hampshire Democrat; Choate is a former adviser to Richard Gephardt and the House Democratic leadership. Although both men agreed with Buchanan on trade and although Choate was a personal friend, they were ideologically closer to Ralph Nader. But they agreed to look the other way, on the theory that Buchanan would use the party merely as a means of running for president. They expected Buchanan to distinguish, in Verney's words, between "the need for a campaign" and "the obligation of running a political party." Buchanan and his staff would worry about the campaign and leave the Reform Party to Verney and the others. Buchanan's run would keep the party from losing its public funding and ballot access; after November, Verney and other party leaders figured, they could recruit a different, perhaps more moderate, candidate for 2004.

They figured wrong. Buchanan and his sister Bay, who manages his campaign, are taking over the Reform Party state by state. In some states, like Pennsylvania, where the leadership already backed Buchanan, the takeover has been amicable. At last week's convention at the Bucks County Sheraton, there was not a murmur of dissent on delegate selection. But in other states the Buchanan forces have resembled, in national party Treasurer Tom McLaughlin's words, "a Viking raiding party." In New Hampshire, Buchanan recruited former Christian Coalition Chairwoman Shelly Uscinski to run his state campaign and to bring a voting majority to the state Reform Party convention. When the handful of existing Reform Party members tried to block her, Uscinski set up her own Reform Party. Similar events have taken place in Iowa, Wisconsin, Virginia, and Colorado. Some of these states will send rival delegations to the Reform Party convention in Long Beach, California, this August.

The Reform Party elders also figured wrong on the substance of Buchanan's campaign. They expected him to emphasize those issues on which they agreed—economic

nationalism and campaign finance reform—while downplaying his conservative social agenda. He has done nothing of the sort. Campaign finance reform has vanished from his platform. He did not mention it in either of the two lengthy speeches he gave at last week's Pennsylvania convention. Pat Benjamin, former vice chairwoman of the New Jersey Reform Party and a strong campaign-finance-reform advocate, says, "He doesn't talk about it at all. When I met with him in September, I asked him to look at that issue and say things about it, and he hasn't."

Instead, Buchanan has prominently featured his views on abortion, education, immigration, homosexuality, and the Confederate flag. I can see little difference between what he said in his past campaigns and what he said in speeches and in an interview in Pennsylvania last week. He is as personally affable as ever and displays a generous sympathy for workers whom the new economy has bypassed, but in his public utterances he is the same holy terror who demonizes Mexican immigrants and calls down God on his enemies. In his speech to the Pennsylvania Reform Party, he spoke about an 82-year-old widow he met on the Arizona border, terrorized by "illegal aliens" who poison cattle and who, he claimed, have killed her guard dogs by throwing them meat filled with broken glass. "This lady is an American, she loves her country, and she lives in a maximum-security prison in her own house because the United States does not have the courage to defend the borders of the United States," Buchanan intoned.

Buchanan's lust for culture war seems every bit as strong today as it was at the Republican convention in Houston in

1992. When I asked him about a column he wrote this spring defending the Confederate flag and attacking those who drag "Jefferson's name ... through the gutter," he launched into a tirade. "It is part of an overall cultural war," Buchanan said. "It entails first the dethroning of the Old and the New Testament, and the removal of religious and Biblical instruction for public institutions, the undermining of the religious beliefs that are based on that faith which is being systematically done, and demythologizing the heroes of the past. It is basically the deconstruction of America. We have to stand up for it."

REFORM PARTY LEADERS claim Buchanan misled them—and, when it comes to his campaign's ideological direction, they are right. Donovan and Benjamin recall a fall meeting at Choate's apartment in Washington, D.C., at which Buchanan told them he would run on economic issues and campaign finance reform and would "table" social issues, putting them "on the back burner." When I asked Buchanan about this, he didn't deny making such a statement but said that in his declaration of candidacy he was clear about his commitment to social issues. But even that isn't true. He devoted almost all of that speech to trade and foreign policy, mentioning his opposition to abortion only in the subordinate clause of a single sentence.

Buchanan also assured Reform Party leaders he would not change the party's platform. Yet in April he told the right-wing weekly *Human Events* that he wanted to create

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"a socially conservative party" to replace the old Reform Party and that he would "append to the platform a personal statement of my convictions and beliefs about life and other social, cultural, and moral issues, and my commitment to appoint only pro-life justices to the Supreme Court." When I asked him about this, Buchanan insisted that such a statement will not affect the platform itself. But Verney says, justifiably, that it is a "distinction without a difference." Indeed, in his fundraising speech in Pennsylvania, Buchanan touted himself as "the most pro-life candidate in the race." Donna Donovan's verdict on Buchanan and his sister seems right: "They want to own the party and build it as a right-wing, pro-life alternative for people that are currently chafing in the Republican Party."

Still, if Buchanan was less than forthcoming in his early conversations with Reform Party leaders, those leaders are also guilty of deceiving themselves. After all, Buchanan and his sister had every reason to seek control of the tottering Reform Party. In the party's constitution, two-thirds of the delegates to the national convention can overturn a primary nomination. Why wouldn't Buchanan try to ensure that he gets a majority of the convention delegates selected by the state parties? It was also predictable that Buchanan would want delegates to present a unified front at the Long Beach convention, which will be televised, and that he would want state parties to help him get on the ballot and gain visibility in the fall.

Verney, Donovan, and Benjamin no longer nourish illusions about Buchanan. Verney is now trying to prevent the

party from endorsing anyone. Donovan says she will probably vote for Ralph Nader in November. But other Reform Party leaders continue to look the other way. Daniel Martino, who is running for the Pennsylvania state legislature on the Reform Party ticket, told me, "We're not about an issue or a candidate. Pat Buchanan gets us the five percent. We'll have federal funds for 2004, and I hope that by then other individuals will step forward who are not as conservative as Pat Buchanan." Still others take an almost surrealistic view of Buchanan's candidacy. Mel Kaplan of the Poconos, who is not happy about it but unwilling to make a fuss, quipped, "I'd love to see him elected. It would be good for the party, but it would be terrible for the country."

Of course, if Buchanan does get his five percent—and manages to retain control of the Reform Party after November—he might discover that it is much easier to organize a presidential campaign than it is to keep a third party going between elections. Many of the Christian conservatives he recruited will go back to the GOP, where they can wield influence locally, if not nationally. Many of the independents who are still harboring false hopes about a centrist party of government reform will also leave. Under Buchanan, a right-wing Reform Party could suffer the same fate as Wallace's American Independent Party, which went from 13.5 percent of the vote in 1968 to 0.21 percent in 1976 to 0.05 percent in 1980—the same percentage garnered that year by Communist Party challenger Gus Hall. That wouldn't be very good for the Reform Party, but it would be good for the country. ■

Guess who hates America? Conservatives.

Fall Guys

By LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN

IN THE CATALOGUE of spectacularly mistaken twentieth-century predictions, the forecasts of the late '80s that American power was in irreversible decline must surely top the list.

The "declinists," gushed *The New York Times* in 1988, "are a small but growing cadre of intellectuals who are wielding considerable political influence.... Their books have sparked a rousing dialogue among professors and politicians that threatens to shake Reagan's America from a decade of rose-colored, Ike-revivalist torpor." The initiators of this rousing dialogue sketched an America caught in a self-perpetuating downward spiral. America's global troop deployments and massive defense spending were bleeding its economy dry. And its diminishing economic strength was making those military commitments more and more difficult to sustain.

LAWRENCE F. KAPLAN is executive editor of *The National Interest*.

The policy implications were clear. As David Calleo wrote in *Beyond American Hegemony*, the United States should curtail its strategic commitments and restore its "fiscal equilibrium through military savings." For people persuaded that American power was tainted—marred by support for too many unsavory dictators and involvement in too many immoral conflicts, above all the Vietnam War—declinism offered a way to say "Come home, America" on scientific rather than ideological grounds. Indeed, to many on the left, Yale University Professor Paul Kennedy's famous diagnosis of "imperial overstretch" functioned as both analysis and exhortation, neatly conflating the accusation that America was an imperial power with the admonition that it cease to be one. This was even truer of Walter Russell Mead, who in his declinist tome, *Mortal Splendor*, hopefully predicted that "if the United States is truly facing an era of stagnant or falling real wages combined with a succession of vicious little wars in the Third World, then Marxism is going to be a much

more attractive ideology than it has been in the recent past.”

Alas, the declinists offered their bleak prognosis just as America's geopolitical rival was crumbling to dust and just before its principal economic competitor went into a tailspin. In the years since, the United States has enjoyed unprecedented economic growth, unrivaled military power, and the near-universal vindication of its national creed. Were foreign policy intellectuals held to the same standards of accountability as doctors and lawyers, a substantial slice of the commentariat would have been sued for malpractice or disbarred about the time the Soviet Union imploded.

How odd, then, that in the pages of foreign policy journals, on the Washington panel circuit, and in the opinion pages of our leading newspapers, terms like “imperial overstretch” and “American exhaustion” have returned to favor. Mandarins of the foreign policy establishment are once again admonishing Americans to “adjust” to their country's shrinking power. Only this time the declinism comes from a very different corner—from ostensibly tough-minded foreign policy “realists,” conservatives in the Kissingerian mold who have somehow managed to locate in one of history's most lopsided victories the seeds of an even greater defeat. And, if left-wing declinism was partly fueled by antipathy toward America's cold war stance, much of the new declinism stems from an even deeper hostility: toward the American idea itself.

THE NEW DECLINISM, too, derives from a “small cadre of intellectuals,” some so obscure that many of the conservative opinion makers who recycle declinist wisdom remain unaware of its origin. And, like its predecessor, the new creed

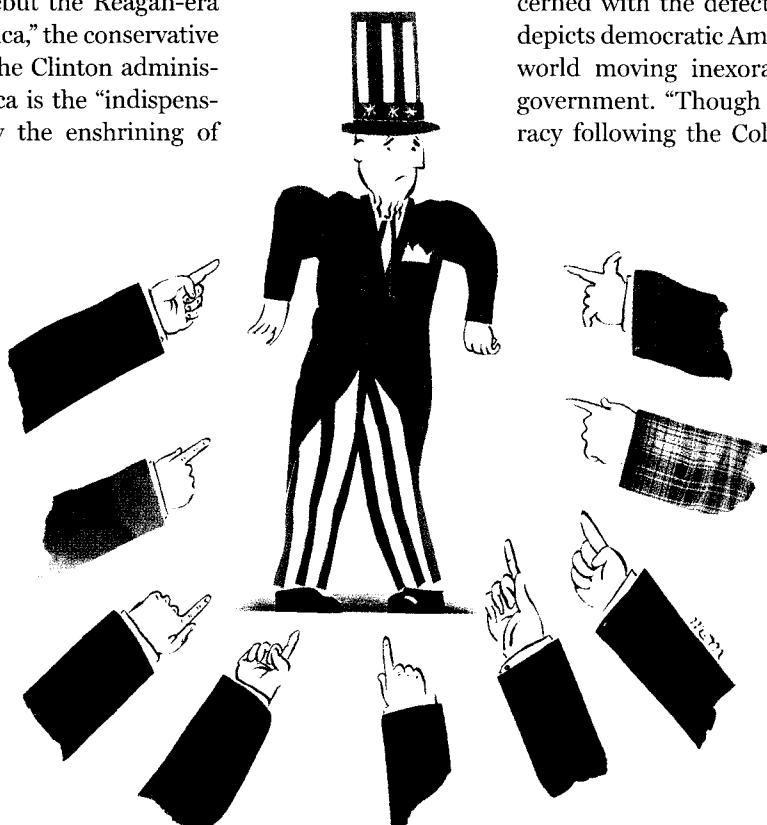
also has a normative purpose. If liberal declinism seemed designed to rebut the Reagan-era cliché of “morning in America,” the conservative version means to debunk the Clinton administration mantra that America is the “indispensable nation.” Unnerved by the enshrining of democracy and human rights as central elements of U.S. foreign policy, the new declinists warn that if naïve policymakers do not drive American power into eclipse, the resentments stirred by their arrogant admonitions surely will. In one article after another, they dismiss post-cold-war “triumphalism” as sheer delusion, arguing that American power is on the wane or soon will be. And, as with the left of a decade ago, the diagnosis presupposes the cure: the United States should mind its own business.

The new declinists do not speak entirely with one voice. But they all end up in the same place. The most prominent is probably Harvard University's Samuel Huntington, one of the most accomplished political scientists of the postwar era and celebrated author, most recently, of *The Clash of Civilizations*. Oddly enough, a decade ago Huntington debunked many of the arguments he now advances. In a 1988 *Foreign Affairs* essay, he dismissed the dire prophecies of the liberal declinists as wishful thinking. Insisting that “the United States is less likely to decline than any other major country,” he wondered whether the fad's boosters simply “want to believe in decline.” By the late '90s, however, his optimism had undergone a profound revision. Now he cautions that “the United States could join the Soviet Union on the ash heap of history” and demands that America curtail its overseas commitments. And where in 1991 Huntington published a book celebrating the worldwide advance of the American creed—counseling Americans that they “have a special interest in the development of a global environment congenial to democracy”—by the mid-'90s he was condemning U.S. efforts to promote such an environment as “false,” “immoral,” and “dangerous.”

Huntington may be the most prestigious declinist, but lately he has been outdone by one of his admirers: Robert D. Kaplan. The conservative *Atlantic Monthly* writer, author, and self-styled “tragic realist” has been credited by the media with, among other things, persuading President Clinton to delay U.S. intervention in Bosnia. (Texas Governor George W. Bush, too, claims Kaplan at the top of his reading list.) Kaplan's latest book, *The Coming Anarchy*, catalogues the “obvious” similarities between the United States and Gibbon's decadent Roman Empire. Arguing that the latter's fate

will soon be our own, Kaplan, who is directly concerned with the defects of “Wilsonian” idealism, depicts democratic America as a fading power in a world moving inexorably toward authoritarian government. “Though the swing toward democracy following the Cold War was a triumph for liberal philosophy,” he warns darkly, “the pendulum will come to rest where it belongs.” In fact, Kaplan's latest jeremiad amounts largely to a brief against U.S. efforts to promote democracy—a creed to which he attributes Nazism, African genocide, and much else besides.

Then there is Chalmers Johnson, a prominent Japan specialist, former CIA consultant, and ivory-tower cold warrior who today sees portents of declining American power in everything from the



Asian economic meltdown to (in his view, justified) terrorist attacks against U.S. installations. Johnson—whose latest book, *Blowback: The Costs and Consequences of American Empire*, suggests that one of the chief occupations of American soldiers abroad is to prey on local women—can barely contain his glee at the prospect of an America cut down to size. “The United States likes to think of itself as the winner of the Cold War,” he concludes. “In all probability, to those looking back a century hence, neither side will appear to have won.”

Johnson and Kaplan may be particularly vituperative, but their perspective has become commonplace in foreign policy salons, the conference rooms of conservative think tanks, and the speeches of Republican congressmen. Warning that “pride goeth before a fall,” former Republican Secretary of Defense James Schlesinger, a pillar of the realist foreign policy establishment and a commissioner on the federally mandated U.S. Commission on National Security, insists that America’s combination of “internal weaknesses” and “national hubris” is speeding its fall from preeminence. (Lynne Cheney, Reagan’s chairwoman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, recently resigned from the \$10 million commission, charging that unfounded assertions of U.S. decline were shaping its conclusions.) Echoing Schlesinger, Richard Haass, a key foreign policy player in the Bush administration and today an adviser to George W., declaims in a recent issue of *Foreign Affairs* that “U.S. superiority will not last. As power diffuses around the world, America’s position relative to others will inevitably erode.” Whereas in 1988 Haass fretted in the pages of *Orbis* that “any decline of the United States is more likely to be brought about by prescriptions for ‘managing decline,’” he now touts his own prescriptions for, well, managing decline.

IN THE BUSH CAMPAIGN, the gloomy views of Haass and his like-minded mentor, Bush adviser Brent Scowcroft, are balanced by prominent neoconservatives like Paul Wolfowitz and Richard Perle. (A memo Wolfowitz drafted for the Pentagon, which spelled out how the United States should cement its primacy, has become Exhibit A in the declinist catalogue of American hubris.) Indeed, the Bush campaign straddles a gap in conservative foreign policy thinking that has been growing wider over the past several years: between neocons who viewed the cold war as a struggle for American ideals and realists who saw it as a classic struggle between two great powers. The former want post-cold-war U.S. foreign policy to continue to reflect the American creed, while the latter espouse a definition of national interest rooted in the unsentimental language of realpolitik. These divisions have already surfaced within Team Bush (on Kosovo, for example), but thus far the candidate has managed to split the difference. Though he cautions against “overstretch,” Bush has also repudiated the foreign policy gloom that has become a staple of Republican congressional speechifying.

And for good reason. Hardly a week goes by that Republicans in Congress do not rue the steep price that America’s “universalistic” pretensions have exacted. Senator Kay Bailey Hutchison of Texas complained in a recent speech at the

Heritage Foundation that America’s policy of “gunpoint democracy” is “draining our own resources,” while Pat Roberts from Kansas has warned on the Senate floor that “the West is declining in relative influence. Asian civilizations are expanding their economic, military, and political strength. The nations of Islam are exploding demographically.” In the House, the lament that America suffers from “imperial overstretch,” as Republican Representative George Nethercutt puts it, has also become an article of faith. “All we are doing,” insists Representative John J. Duncan Jr., “is wasting billions of dollars and making enemies all over the world.”

AT FIRST GLANCE, the new pessimism would appear even more glaringly at odds with international realities than the old pessimism was. There exists today a large and growing body of data by which to measure America’s position in the world—but that data directly counters the portrait of a superpower in decline. The distance between America and its nearest rival far exceeds that which separated earlier hegemonic powers such as Great Britain and Spain from their competitors and which set America apart from the USSR.

But data is not the point, because the new pessimism does not really stem from a glance at international realities at all. America’s “preeminence, and certainly its ability to lead,” explains Schlesinger, “are being undermined by internal weaknesses rather different from those that have affected great powers in the past.” The problem, in other words, is us. Specifically, American power is eroding as a result of two American “weaknesses”: cultural rot and an excess of democracy.

In their preoccupation with America’s moral corruption, the new declinists extend to foreign policy the cultural despair of Paul Weyrich, Robert Bork, and many other pessimists on the right. “What does it tell about the West,” Huntington asks, “when Westerners identify their civilization with fizzy liquids, faded pants, and fatty foods?” For Huntington, it tells that the United States is going to hell in a handbasket, subject, like the West as a whole, to “internal processes of decay.” In a similar vein, conservative political scientist James Kurth, whose gloomy forecasts were a staple of foreign policy journals such as *Foreign Affairs*, *The National Interest*, and *Orbis* throughout the ‘90s, writes, “It is a cliché that American popular culture is something different from the pervasive cultures of many of the empires of the past. The cultures that these earlier empires put forward were both pervasive and elevating.” Not this one. Formed by decadence, “the ideal human type of the American empire” is characterized by “self-centeredness, energy and aggressiveness. As with the SS officer and the new Soviet man, these are not the distinguishing qualities of a mature person.” And adolescents, Kurth hastens to add, are ill-equipped to preside over empires. Never mind that, if anything, American pop culture seduces more foreign imaginations than it repels. For the new declinists, it is inconceivable that the same Americans who have been debasing the home front will continue to reign supreme in the international arena.

America's *political* culture is considered to have an even more corrosive effect on its global strength. Devotees of *realpolitik* have never been entirely sympathetic to the democratic sensibilities of the American citizenry, which, they complain, create a diversionary interest in human rights and corrupt the broader ends of U.S. policy. No less an American institution than George Kennan—an arch-declinist of his time—famously compared American democracy to “one of those prehistoric monsters with a body as long as [a] room and [a] brain the size of a pin.” The need to rally Americans behind the cold war, however, led orthodox realists to mute such sentiments. Instead, they became some of the fiercest defenders of America's liberal institutions, couching their policy prescriptions in the language of American exceptionalism and insisting that if they opposed efforts to promote democracy abroad, well, it was only because the Founding Fathers intended for America to inspire by example.

But the new declinists no longer need to invoke John Winthrop to justify their *realpolitik*. In a *Washington Post* op-ed criticizing the “two new elite ideologies” of “neoliberalism” and “neoconservatism,” the Nixon Center's Dimitri Simes and former NATO Ambassador Robert Ellsworth claim, “The assumption that our values are universal is false because it is demonstrably untrue; immoral because of what would be necessary to make non-Western peoples adopt Western institutions and culture; and dangerous because it could lead to war.” In fact, the declinists argue that “our values,” far from being a vital component of America's global strength, may soon prove its undoing. The reason is that weaknesses of American democracy that were well-controlled during the cold war—weaknesses that, according to Schlesinger, range from “the character of the American Constitution (whose defects are the obverse side of its strengths), to the American constitution in a broader sense, that is, the elements and the habits of mind of the American democracy”—are today wrecking U.S. foreign policy. And what are the defects of that broader “constitution”? One is the opening of U.S. foreign policy to the influence of historically marginal American ethnic groups (“It is scarcely possible to overstate the influence of Israel's supporters on our policies in the Middle East,” complains Schlesinger). Another is the disuniting of America that has resulted from letting “immigrants from other civilizations” into the country at all. Huntington, for example, frets that a polyglot America “will not be the United States; it will be the United Nations.”

AND WITH THEIR reservations about American democracy goes a reflexive sympathy for America's detractors abroad, whether they be Serb, Russian, or Chinese. Singapore's authoritarian “Asian values,” in particular, have been singled out for praise by Kaplan, Alexander Haig, Henry Kissinger, and other conservative realists. And, as always with the declinists, the descriptive and the normative are intertwined: justifiably opposed to America's hegemony and what Hutchison characterizes as its “gunpoint democracy,” other nations are successfully working to cut it down to size. “To all but the myopic,” insists Kenneth Waltz, the leading

U.S. academic realist and a steadfast critic of American “triumphalism,” multipolarity “can already be seen on the horizon.” Relative decline might even be a good thing. “The United States,” Huntington assured last year, “could find life as a major power in a multipolar world less demanding, less contentious, and more rewarding than it was as the world's only superpower.” “American foreign policy,” Haass recommends, “should not resist such multipolarity (which would be futile) but define it.”

IN MANY WAYS, today's conservative declinists and yesterday's liberal declinists share the same perspective. But in one fundamental way they differ. The declinists of the '80s, spectacularly wrong as they turned out to be, did not consider America beyond redemption. They were, if anything, hopeful declinists—they viewed a reduction of America's cold war entanglements as the precondition for redistributing domestic wealth and “reinventing” democracy at home. The new declinists, by contrast, do not enjoin their countrymen to improve themselves, either spiritually or materially. Their cultural despair, combined with realism's inherent fatalism, has yielded instead an enfeebling mindset that condemns exhortation as “futile” and “naïve.” The bad news they report holds no promise of redemption; it is merely bad news. If they counsel America to come home (and here the new declinists plainly do exhort), it is not because the country can save itself by turning inward. At best, they claim, a minimalist policy might spare others its depredations. As Kurth put it in an *Orbis* essay, “[T]he United States itself has become the great power that opposes much of what was once thought of as Western civilization.” The pollution is civilizational; it runs far too deep to be reversed by mere changes of policy or presidential administration.

But the danger is precisely that the declinists will influence Republican policy and Republican presidents. For the quintessentially European inclination to accommodate and adapt to decline, to surrender control over one's destiny—even when circumstances do not justify such a surrender—all too easily becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Quite apart from whether the collapse of confidence is warranted, the political effects of such despair—the passivity, obtuseness, and collective self-loathing it encourages—hardly promote rational policy-making. That despair is, and always has been, destructive to the cause of self-preservation. It was exactly this inclination that during the 1930s drove British conservatives to appeasement and their French counterparts to yearn for defeat. And it is having a similar effect today among American conservatives.

But then, for the new declinists, willing American power into eclipse is the whole point. Beneath the technocratic jargon, the urgent demands that the United States accommodate itself to hitherto indiscernible “facts,” the caustic denigration of America the “rogue superpower,” and the contempt for the ideological substance of the “American empire” all betray a yearning to see U.S. power erode. Today, as before, the most formidable challenge to that power comes not from Europe, imperial overstretch, or rock and roll but from false prophets in our midst. ■

Stanley Kauffmann on Films Kieslowski's Commandments

WHAT HAVE BERGMAN'S *Scenes from a Marriage* and Fassbinder's *Berlin Alexanderplatz* in common? Each was made as a series of television programs. To this odd source of film achievement we must now ascribe another fine work, Krzysztof Kieslowski's **Decalogue** (New Yorker). This is a series of ten films, each one slightly less than an hour long, made for Polish TV in 1988–1989. The series has since been shown at several festivals and on special occasions in various countries. Two parts of the series have been released here separately (and were reviewed in this column). Now *Decalogue*, widely written and talked about in the last decade, is released in American theaters in its entirety.

It arrives after some other Kieslowski films—*The Double Life of Veronique* and the trilogy *Blue, White, and Red* among them—have displayed his exceptional talent, as did those two excerpts from *Decalogue*. But the whole series, seen right through, surpasses my previous experience of his work. It not only belongs with the Bergman and the Fassbinder series as another prime instance of what has been called the amphibious film, one that thrives on both the small and the large screen; it breathes—it almost trembles with—compassion and insight.

The purpose, as the title and the number of parts make clear, is a series dealing with each of the Ten Commandments. At first this idea might seem suspect: too neat, too temptingly moralistic. But Kieslowski and his co-writer Krzysztof Piesiewicz, who have collaborated before, saw it as a chance for inquiry, not for sermon, ten avenues of exploration into the acceptances and the values of their world, investigations of the way the commandments still function and apply—if they do. This approach is so important to the work that comment on *Decalogue* must start with the screenplays.

Decalogue is fundamentally a Kieslowski-Piesiewicz project, subsequently fulfilled by the director. This view is more

fitting in film judgment than is often acknowledged; and in this case it is absolutely unavoidable. All the parts take place in, or are connected with, a huge modern apartment-house complex in Warsaw. Each of the ten parts is separate and complete. A few references in later parts to people who were encountered earlier are only private nudges, not essential matters. In the best of the parts, the commandment is approached obliquely and is wrung for its deepest pervasive relevance, not thundered from a latter-day Sinai. For instance, the sixth, "Thou shalt not commit adultery": far from marital stricture, this is about a very young, inexperienced man who lives in one of the apartments and who spies with a telescope on the sexual activities of an attractive woman across the courtyard, a woman whom he does not know but with whom he is in consuming love. Eventually she discovers his spying, which angers her, and the force of his love, which touches her. The episode concludes with the conclusion of that love. "Adultery" is seen here as the violation of a spiritual union rather than a legal one.

In No. 7, "Thou shalt not steal," a woman in her twenties kidnaps a little girl who we think is her sister but who is in fact the daughter she bore when she was sixteen. The child was brought up as the daughter of the young woman's own parents, the couple who are really the child's grandparents. The true mother's plan to abduct her child runs into emotional tangles that could not be foreseen. Stealing here has implications far beyond pilfering.

About some of the screenplay there must be reservations. Cleverness falters in No. 10, "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's goods," which is about two sons who inherit their elderly father's valuable stamp collection. They begin as two brothers who are close to each other; the changes that the inheritance causes in them are predictable. In No. 1, "Thou shalt have no other gods before me," the point is overly blunt. A youngish scientist learns a terrible but blatant lesson about the fal-

libility of the science that has become his divinity.

But, after the script, consider the directing. The screenplay's beauties are magnified, and its lesser moments are generally overcome, by the intense power of the film as such. Possibly because it was planned for television but in any case very aptly, Kieslowski works in close to his actors a good deal of the time, making us feel almost like privileged intruders into private situations. He varies this visual approach occasionally with a long shot from a window above a street or a curious angle underneath someone's crooked arm, almost as if to remind us that we are audience, not members of the cast, but for the most part we are in there breathing with his people. At the finish we are so immersed that we almost feel Middle European, saddened and seasoned.

For some unknown reason, Kieslowski used a different cinematographer for almost every episode. (One of them, Piotr Sobocinski, was used twice.) But the variety is imperceptible: the series looks like the work of one man. Almost all of the lighting depends a good deal on shadow—there is more side lighting than frontal lighting, so that the characters seem to be moving through textured lives. Most of the episodes take place in winter or cool weather, and the visual mode of the film agrees with the temperature. Often a splash of red or green, carefully placed, reminds us that this is a color film, but much of the time the frame has the non-nonsense gravity of black-and-white, intent not on news-photo candor but on shades of gray.

The music for the series was written by Zbigniew Preisner, and in every case, though individually in every case, it has a suspended, open feeling, a sense of exploration. Preisner uses only a few instruments and uses them sparingly, as audible atmosphere. In No. 9, for instance, a three-note figure, plucked, is repeated with variations throughout, suggesting astringency, the barrenness that is the theme of that part.

About the actors there can be only praise, even awe. What a fine company, each of them acutely cast, many of them surprising us as their episodes unroll with facets of character that are apt but unexpected. Some of these actors are as well-known in the United States as Polish actors can be—Daniel Olbrychski, Maja Komorowska, Krystyna Janda—and all of them are distinguished by three qualities. They all understand that the secret of realistic film acting is to let the camera find the performance, not to

splash it at the camera. They all understand that true realism is not a matter of veristic detail but of sensibility. And they all seem like aspects of a treasury, of a culture in which acting is esteemed as an agency of truth.

Kieslowski, who made eleven feature films, died in 1996 at the age of fifty-four. *Decalogue* has its first extended American theatrical engagement, too long delayed, at the Lincoln Plaza in New York. The first two parts are being shown together for two weeks, then the next two for two weeks, and so on for a total of five weeks.

Engagements in other cities are being planned. *Decalogue* is also available on tape, a five-cassette set with two films on each reel, from Facets Video in Chicago.

With this film, like the other series mentioned earlier, it doesn't greatly matter whether the work is seen on a small or a large screen, since it was designed for the former and adjusts comfortably to the latter. However it is seen, *Decalogue*, like every good film, like every good work of art, immediately becomes a paradox: an intensely private possession that is shared with others. ■

quite possibly a writer of "no necessary distinction."

These extremities are curiously united in their approach to the idea of the poet and his literary intentions. Neither the idolaters nor the materialists have very much interest in Shakespeare as a writer. The former petrify him as transcendent, the latter dissolve him as symptomatic. And neither is interested in addressing Shakespeare's intentions. Though the idolaters speak confidently of "what Shakespeare means," they ignore the question of intention to the extent that they do not ever consider it failing, as even the greatest writers attempt and fail. And though the materialists would seem to have a more complex view of Shakespeare, as both an intending or originating author and one who was also unknowingly possessed by the ideologies of his era, in practice they never address intention either; and for the same reason as the idolaters: they do not regard intention failing, because a symptomatic text cannot help being always a successful text: it is necessarily, and therefore successfully, symptomatic.

Neither side is ever stirred to discuss value, though both assume it—the idolaters explicitly; and the materialists implicitly, if only to later attack it—and this is because neither side, for its own different reasons, has any interest in literary failure. But Frank Kermode is extremely interested in failure and success, and demands to see Shakespeare as a mortal writer, subject to a mortal's flats and sharps. It is not just that Kermode is happy to pronounce whole passages, and indeed whole plays, tedious or unconvincing: he thinks little of *Titus Andronicus* and *All's Well*, considers only the first half of *Measure for Measure* great, and seems a good deal less warmed by *Henry IV, Parts 1 and 2* than are most readers. More systematically, Kermode's book returns to weigh, again and again, Shakespeare's difficult passages, his hard sayings. Some of these are famous editorial cruxes, others are famous soliloquies, in which Shakespeare is invariably at his most paradoxical and dialectical. He is especially interested in what he thinks is a "new style" that Shakespeare began writing in around 1600, a time when he was producing the *Sonnets*, the curious and tautly metaphysical poem "The Phoenix and the Turtle," and, chiefly, *Hamlet*. This new style, characterized above all by soliloquies and perorations of kinetic and knotted imagery, bloomed in 1605–1607: this was the astonishing period of about two years,

He Words Us

By JAMES WOOD

Shakespeare's Language by Frank Kermode

(Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 324 pp., \$30)

I.

FRANK KERMODE'S BOOK is magnificent, the honey of a lifetime's visits to the Shakespearean garden. As befits the book's air of tested longevity, Kermode, who is now eighty, writes about Shakespeare calmly, unpossessively, and lucidly, with a nicely smothered academicism. His considerable scholarship paves the bottom of his pages, as a series of intricate footnotes, leaving the main body of his text pedestrianized, as it were, for the ordinary walking reader. This is an unruffled work. At times in the past, Kermode's amused detachment, his strenuous moderation, has been frustrating, and one has willed him to come down from his donnish hydraulics and involve himself in contemporary wars. But *Shakespeare's Language* is enriched by its reasonable in-betweenness. The *via media* is the book's principle.

Shakespeare studies has become a corridor of custody battles. Shakespeare is easily claimed, particularly in Britain, and often by extremists. On the one side are the idolaters, who poach the playwright in reverence. They talk about Shakespeare's "genius"; and for them no passage in the plays can display haste, errancy, obscurity, or verbosity. An ideological canopy exists, underneath which this idolatry is practiced: by the school examination system,

and the Royal Shakespeare Company, and the BBC, and politicians who practice *sortes Biblicae* on the plays and quote characters out of context, and Prince Charles, who lets off a puff or two every so often about the decline in usage of "Shakespeare's English." America has Charlton Heston, for whom Shakespeare is, after the NRA, the other canon, and at a higher level Harold Bloom, who believes that Shakespeare did nothing less than "invent the human."

On the opposite side, recent developments in critical theory have tended to demote Shakespeare, or at least to secularize him. The adepts of New Historicism and cultural materialism have evoked a poet who is less the sovereignly intending writer than the symptom of the age he worked in—the sponge of discourses. For such readers, it would not be possible, let alone desirable, for Shakespeare to transcend history. Instead, history works through Shakespeare; and we, too, work through Shakespeare, imposing our varied desires and projections onto the great plays, which by themselves are thought incapable of generating meaning. For the most politicized critics, the reverence racket is the ideological enemy, that which keeps in place a cultural token which may well be overvalued. One British theorist has written that Shakespeare is a kind of black hole, into which we throw all our cultural meanings, and

when it is thought that Shakespeare wrote *King Lear*, *Coriolanus*, *Antony and Cleopatra*, *Macbeth*, and *Timon of Athens*. Even Kermode becomes an idolater for a day, as he describes this unnatural afflatus.

II.

THERE ARE OBVIOUS differences between even a rich early play such as *Romeo and Juliet* and the inversions and anxieties of a later one such as *Macbeth*. They are the differences between an ordered poetry and an almost disordered poetry, between a poet bestowing finished verse on his characters and a poet letting his characters think through, or use, his almost unfinished verse. Thus Kermode takes Shakespeare's great project, in these tragedies, to be the attempt to represent anxious and disordered thought as sensitively as possible. Inevitably, this risked obscurity.

Sometimes, Kermode writes, this "takes the poet beyond the limits of reason and intelligibility." He finds an early example in *Richard II* (1597), in which Bushy is consoling the Queen, and using a complex analogy about shadows, false and true sorrow, eyes and tears, and perspective.

Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
Which shows like grief itself, but is not so;
For sorrow's eyes, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire to many objects,
Like perspectives, which rightly gaz'd upon
Show nothing but confusion; ey'd awry
Distinguish form; so your sweet majesty,
Looking awry upon your lord's departure,
Find shapes of grief, more than himself, to wail,
Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows
Of what it is not; then, thrice-gracious Queen,
More than your lord's departure weep not—more is not seen,
Or if it be, 'tis with false sorrow's eye,
Which for things true weeps things imaginary.

As Kermode remarks, it is difficult to be entirely sure what Shakespeare or Bushy is saying here. But the importance is that Bushy is "thinking": Bushy, writes Kermode, has "hit upon a difficult analogy and is working it out as cleanly as he can." The speech is "one of a kind not infrequently found in Shakespeare, where a complicated idea fails to find perfect expression."

Such passages were often censured by Samuel Johnson, who then attempted to tidy them up. But nowadays we bathe in ambiguity, and award each word seven lives, and always give the poet the benefit of the Empsonian doubt. Kermode owes much to Empson, and he possesses great skill in the coaxing of multiple ambiguities; but he also has a Johnsonian robustness, and a desire to limit loose interpretability. He remarks, in a discussion of a famous instance of the word "prone" in *Measure for Measure*, that "we must impose some limits, or explanation gets lost in mere noise." This handsome impatience with what is nowadays called aporia—abysmal, infinite, unstable interpretability—naturally leads Kermode back, as it must every responsible critic, to the idea of intention, and to the attempt to figure out what Shakespeare might conceivably have had in mind. And this in turn leads him to the notion—something that Johnson himself suggested—that in difficult and knotty passages such as Bushy's speech, Shakespeare is trying, and perhaps failing, to work something out. "The exciting thing about Bushy's speech is that in it we find Shakespeare struggling with a sentiment rendered stubborn by the circumstance that the speaker appears to be thinking, is doing his intellectual best to get his consolation across, and is getting slightly muddled in the process, the slight muddle being a by-product of the effort to represent intellection."

IF ONE TURNS from Bushy's speech to one of the great, impacted soliloquies in *Macbeth*, it is apparent that Shakespeare's command of dramatic poetry has burgeoned immeasurably. Consider the moment in Act I, scene vii, when Macbeth ponders the consequences of his murdering the gentle King, Duncan, and imagines retribution as "a naked newborn babe / Striding the blast":

Besides, this Duncan
Hath borne his faculties so meek,
hath been
So clear in his great office, that his virtues
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against
The deep damnation of his taking-off;
And pity, like a naked newborn babe
Striding the blast, or heaven's cherubin horsed
Upon the sightless couriers of the air,
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye
That tears shall drown the wind. I have
no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps itself
And falls on th'other—

Kermode delights in this "extraordinary, excited mingling of disparate figures," and quotes Empson, who wrote that "the meanings in this passage cannot be remembered at once, however often you read it; it remains the incantation of a murderer, dishevelled and fumbling among the powers of darkness." Passages such as this one, from the great tragedies but also from *The Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*, absorb Kermode, who sees *Coriolanus* as, in some ways, the apex of Shakespeare's new, or late, style: "the energy, the flurries of oblique association ... the play of figures, echoing one another, the failure or refusal to follow the old course of milking similitudes..." In this late style there is "no laborious working out of the figures, instead a sort of impatience at the unexplored resources of language." The tragedies in particular are marked by an "intense brooding" over certain sets of words (for instance, "time" and "man" in *Macbeth*, "world" and "word" in *Antony and Cleopatra*, and so on).

THIS POWERFUL TREADING and re-treading over chosen words is, as Kermode remarks, clearly deliberate, and allows the production of texts "impregnated with ideas, and with words, that are always under question from the language itself of the play." Kermode is much, and appropriately, concerned with how Shakespeare's audience was able to understand this flashing verse. "It is simply inconceivable," he writes, "that anybody at the Globe, even those described by Shakespeare's contemporary, the critic Gabriel Harvey, as 'the wiser sort,' could have followed every sentence of *Coriolanus*." Thus "we need to ask what 'following' entails." Kermode wisely thinks that "one can follow the drift without fully understanding," and this is partly because although Shakespeare often refuses to settle for "a single, simple sense," he "leaves one around to keep the reader or auditor quiet."

But if it is hard for the theatergoer to catch all the meanings in Macbeth's rippling soliloquies, then how much harder is that task when Shakespeare seems unable or unwilling to unpack his obscurities. Macbeth's imagery is swift and riverine, but it is certainly vivid: we see in our mind's eye a religious vision of pity crying out "like a newborn babe," we can feel the avenging wind, drowned by tears, just as Macbeth can. But compare a passage (which Kermode does not mention) in *Antony and Cleopatra*, when Pompey is rhetorically calling upon the image of Cleopatra to make Antony drowsy with love, and thus render him incapable of war:

But all the charms of love,
Salt Cleopatra, soften they waned lip!
Let witchcraft joined with beauty,
lust with both,
Tie up the libertine in a field of feasts,
Keep his brain fuming. Epicurean cooks,
Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite,
That sleep and feeding may prorogue his
honor
Even till a Lethe'd dullness—

By the standards of *Antony and Cleopatra*, this speech is easy enough. It is without abstraction, and without that self-sickening, dialectical force that is one of the play's intellectual motifs: Cleopatra, we recall, "makes hungry/Where most she satisfies," and Caesar describes the populace as a common body, which, like a vagabond (or drifting) flag on a stream, "goes to and back, lackeying [following like a lackey] the varying tide/To rot itself with motion." Yet Pompey's peroration has its own obstacles. The idea of Cleopatra's aging lip as not merely withered but "waned" is unusual; indeed, the forcing of an adjective out of the verb "to wane" is Shakespeare's neologism. And just as the audience has moved from "waned" to the vivid picture of Antony tied up "in a field of feasts," Shakespeare serves them another word which only he is listed as ever having used: "cloyless," which means failing to satisfy. Finally, though most of Shakespeare's audience will have been familiar with Lethe, the adjective "Lethe'd" is again the writer's invention.

Such were the lessons in word-formation for anyone unwise enough to stumble into the Globe in 1607. And yet the audience is never really helpless before Shakespeare. Pompey's speech is emblematic here. Kermode is right that Shakespeare always leaves a simple meaning lying around while he juggles ambivalences. But even more bluntly, Shakespeare's tendency to abundance—his fondness for going on a bit—means that his characters are often using speeches as vehicles of rhetorical repetition, rather as, in Elizabethan usage, the "blazon" offers a rhetorical listing of a

lover's attributes. Thus Pompey's rhetorical request could be paraphrased in a single line—"ensnare Antony with love"—but he uses various sublime images to embroider his theme. This is characteristic of Shakespeare, and means that if theatergoers do not "get" one line, they will probably get the next, since meaning is being combed rather than teased, underlined rather than undermined.

Consider also how swiftly accessible are Shakespeare's newly invented words. When Joyce coins new words in *Finnegans Wake*, more often than not his neol-

him." "If thou with Caesar paragon again/My man of men." "Tis not a time for private stomaching." "She pursed up his heart." "He plowed her, and she cropped." "I'll unhair thy head!" "Whate'er the ... sky inclips/Is thine." "Cleopatra/Hath nodded him to her." "Now hazarded to thy grace." "Disponge upon me." "The hearts/That spanieled me at heels." "I shall see/Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness/I'the posture of a whore."

When Caesar says of Antony that "Cleopatra/Hath nodded him to her," Shakespeare invents a verb (later borrowed by

the always Shakespear-ean Keats) in a familiar way, which is the conversion of an intransitive verb into a transitive one. Something similar happens in *Coriolanus* with the verb "office," when Menenius, the aged senator, is being stopped by a minor official from seeing Coriolanus in his tent, and the old man bursts out: "a Jack guardant cannot office me from my son Coriolanus." This shift into activity gives the previously passive word a remarkable violence: it is like seeing an ornamental weapon being used for the first time. And this violence of re-using helps, I think, to hurry the meaning into our minds.

III.

Clearly, Shakespeare's periphrastic and hyperbolic style must have perplexed (and thrilled) contemporary audiences, just as it does their modern counterparts. It is possible to

find Shakespeare at times superbly vivid, and at times merely circumlocutionary. Antony's description of Italy, as glittering everywhere with weapons of civil war—"Our Italy/Shines o'er with civil swords"—seems an attempt at metaphor that is only distracting; but when Macbeth implores the doctor to help Lady Macbeth, he finds a marvelous image: "Raze out the written troubles of the brain," a phrase which manages to combine the idea of our trouble as a sentence, something "written" by the Gods; and the customary idea of the mind as a book upon which are written our sins (or thoughts); and the idea of the lines on a



William Shakespeare by Vint Lawrence for The New Republic

ogisms are briefly incomprehensible (thus arresting the reader) or punningly knowing (arresting the reader in a more pleasurable way). But Shakespeare's are uncannily right, so that they seem inevitable, and not neologisms at all, but natural outcrops of the language. *Antony and Cleopatra* is astonishingly rich in verbs invented from nouns, most of which had not been used before Shakespeare used them. Yet almost all swiftly channel us into their semantic stream. Here is a selection: the eunuch whom Cleopatra calls "unseminared"; the messenger who says that Antony's horse neighed so loudly that what he said was "beastly dumbbed by

forehead (which signify distress) as written into the brow. Doubtless, readers storm upon all three meanings in a flash, without needing to unpack them; and this, one suspects, is what Kermode nicely means by "following."

Still, there is a chanciness to metaphor and simile. Readers do not always agree on the "success" of a particular metaphor; and readers now frown especially on catachresis, or mixed metaphor. But mixed metaphor is one of Shakespeare's (and the Psalmist's) happiest modes ("My tears have been my meat, day and night.") When Hotspur complains about "the moody frontier of a servant's brow," in *Henry IV, Part 1*, there are readers who will object that a frontier cannot be moody, or who feel that the image evokes nothing very much for them. I find such a phrase the very essence of Shakespeare's language, and am surprised that Kermode so swiftly skips over the two plays en route to the later tragedies.

MIXED METAPHOR is surely one of the obstacles, and the beauties, in Shakespeare's language. In our day, it is mediocrity's lunge at greatness to cry foul whenever a mixed metaphor appears; but Shakespeare and Milton and most great poets mix metaphors, precisely so as to concentrate the already metaphorical. That is to say, metaphor is already a mixing of disparate agents—a brow is not really like a frontier—and so mixed metaphor could be said to be the essence, the hypostasis, of metaphor: if a brow is like a frontier, then it follows that a frontier can be moody. In this way, mixed metaphor is not chaotic but logical: a series of exaggerated propositions. It is partly by means of the logic of mixed metaphor that Shakespeare offers us such a powerful image of the mind at work, stretched helplessly along the path of association.

Not all mixed metaphor, of course, introduces or invents a conceptual necessity. In contemporary mixed metaphor—say, "out of a sea of despair, he has brought forth a plum"—the metaphorical element is often dimmed, almost to nonexistence, by cliché. What people dislike, then, is the mixing of cliché, and a certain inappropriateness of machinery: plums are not found in the sea. But Shakespeare's metaphors more often inhabit a speculative realm rather than a mechanical realm, in which the reader has already been asked to abandon a customary world of familiar correspondences (pity is like a newborn babe, and so on).

When a writer suffers a hypertrophy, or even a hysteria, of metaphor, as Shakespeare and Melville do, then we are, in effect, in a sea of chance, in which the

reader or auditor is constantly being asked, implicitly of course, to judge the success and failure, the workability, of one outlandish metaphor after another. But whose failure, and whose success? Shakespeare's, or his characters'—those characters who use, and so need, Shakespeare's metaphors and similes? This is not mere quibbling. For a curious paradox hangs from the idea of a dramatic poet who is using metaphor and analogy to represent the turbulence of his characters' minds. It means that Shakespeare donates, as it were, his own cherished metaphors to his characters. In the speech by Bushy, is Shakespeare trying to say something about shadows and tears and himself getting "muddled"? Or is Shakespeare perfectly capable of greater clarity, but deliberately muddling things a little, intentionally mangling the speech a bit, in order to give us the most direct sense possible of a mind—Bushy's—struggling to express itself?

THERE IS ALWAYS this tension in dramatic poetry, which continues today as an exactly similar tension in the stream of consciousness in the novel. (Faulkner must write like Faulkner but also like a five-year-old boy, when he gives his language to Vardaman in *As I Lay Dying*.) When Cornwall shouts out that his servants should bind fast Gloucester's "corky arms," most listeners get a thrill of pleasure, characteristic of our watching Shakespeare, at the delicious justice of the word—the old man's arms, white and crumbly, like old cork. But it is hardly likely that a vicious aristocrat would ever have expressed himself as beautifully as this, and most listeners decide for themselves that this is Shakespeare the poet having his say—inserting into a character's mouth a line of unlikely but lovely poetry.

Once again, we are led back to unknowable intention. Kermode does not press on this paradox as hard as he might have done, and he leaves open the idea that at times Shakespeare was being haplessly obscure (unable to order his thoughts) and at times deliberately obscure (letting a character mangle Shakespeare's thoughts into disorder). This is probably the only respectable way of leaving it, since we cannot ask Shakespeare himself. But it is still an evasion, and a piquant one, given that criticism such as Kermode's grows out of an impatience with such evasion, and flourishes (properly, in my view) a desire to adjudicate on the failures and the successes of passages of verse.

Even if this is irresolvable, it needs to be named as a paradox. Going further, one can hazard that it seems likely not that

Shakespeare deliberately muddled things in order to let his characters seem muddled, but that he was fully aware of the inevitable chanciness of metaphor, and saw that metaphor was simultaneously his own greatness as a poet and the only way to dramatize the anxious struggles of thought. In other words, Shakespeare saw that even when a metaphor "fails," it also "succeeds," since he never saw metaphor as something finished, but as a kind of instant ruin. Metaphor is clearly a process for Shakespeare—a traveling, as its etymology suggests. It is never completed, and so it is a fitting emblem of the mental processes of his characters. It is not too much to claim that for Shakespeare the metaphorical is the very image of the mind at work.

KERMODE TAKES THE reader through the major tragedies and the last plays, paying acute attention to such questions. He is a marvelous reader of the way the poet gives different idiolects to different characters, of the way Shakespeare dared to introduce low comedy into tragic situations, even at the risk of disrupting the expectedly "high" effect, if this seemed to fulfill the needs of characterization. (It was this mixing of high and low which so troubled the young Schiller, as he records in *On Naïve and Sentimental Poetry*.) One of Kermode's examples is the Nurse's repetitive, pretentious lamentations over Juliet's apparent corpse in Act IV of *Romeo and Juliet*. An extraordinary moment to risk laughter, says Kermode. Yet the Nurse is just the kind of person who would be "sly enough to imitate the mourning of her betters." In other words, the Nurse is comically inauthentic, even in grief, and Shakespeare wants to shows us this.

From this kind of contradictory reality is built modern fictional character, and Shakespeare is its founder and still its greatest practitioner. Kermode is a splendid critic of the way Shakespeare bends his poetry in the service of different characters. There is a moment when he is discussing *The Tempest*, and he remarks that Shakespeare had to create a special language for Ariel, who is not human. Ariel, early in the play, tells us how he has left the newly shipwrecked Ferdinand, sitting by himself "in an odd angle of the isle," "cooling of the air with sighs," and sitting on the beach, with "his arms in this sad knot." Kermode comments that this curious picture is just how a non-human might represent a grieving earthling: "the small, sympathetic caricature is a sketch of a mourning human made by one who is familiar with the notion that humans feel sorrow and express it in their own ways." That is so delicately and finely

observed, that one will never again encounter that little picture of Ferdinand with his arms in a "sad knot" without thinking of Kermode's commentary. There are little apertures throughout Coleridge's criticism like that; during his own such, Kermode proves himself Coleridge's worthy heir.

IV.

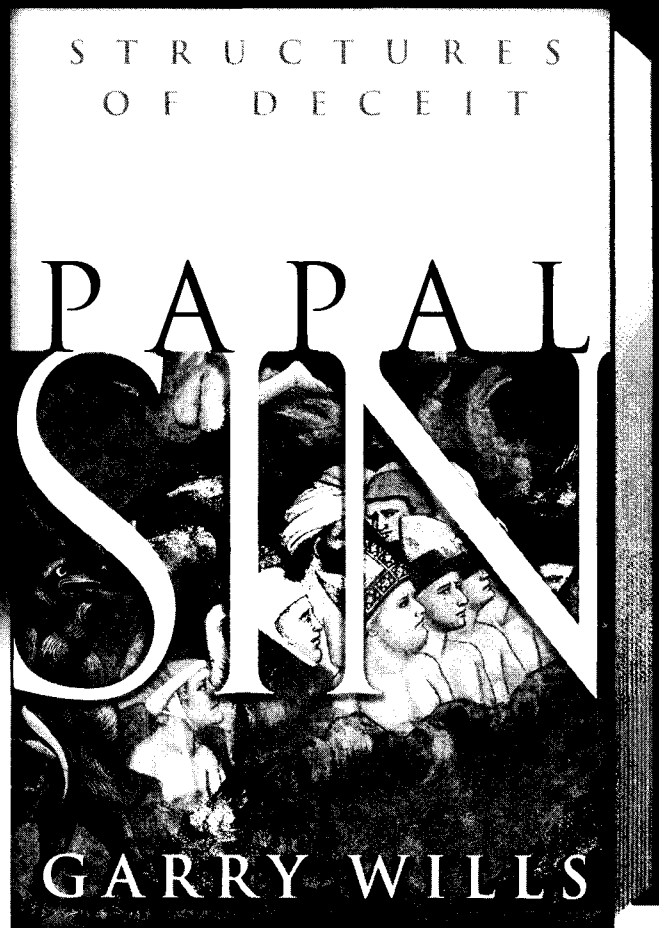
RE-READING THE TRAGEDIES, one is stuck, lovestruck, by the frothing superfluities of the verse. So powerful is Shakespeare's commitment to abundance, to sweet gratuity, that he seems to find it difficult to express negatives that are not really positives—additions that only speak of subtraction. Iras describes Antony as "unqualified with very shame." She means that Antony is losing, or has lost qualities; yet Shakespeare can express this only by adding, rather than taking away from, the word quality: "unqualified." (It is Shakespeare's neologism, and the only example in the *OED*.) Something similar occurs in *King Lear*, when Goneril implores her father to reduce his entourage, "a little to disquantity your train." Again, the verb swells even as it gestures at reduction.

This is partly, of course, Shakespeare's natural effervescence, his Keatsian "fine excess," his rollicking in fields of feasts. Yet it incarnates, one surmises, a metaphysics. Medieval theology was often apophatic; that is, it defined God only by talking of what He was not. Aquinas's formulation is famous: "We cannot know what God is, but only what He is not." And in 1 Corinthians 2, Paul writes that "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God."

Shakespeare holds a secular glass to this theology. It is as if he is incapable of undoing presence. His unspeakabilities are noisy. This, perhaps, may be one deep and obscure reason for that sensation most readers share, that Shakespeare is almost without religion, that he is a kind of pagan. He lets Bottom reply to Paul, in his famous soliloquy:

I have had a most rare vision. I have had a dream, past the wit of man to say what dream it was. Man is but an ass if he go about to expound this dream. Methought I was—there is no man can tell what. Methought I was and methought I had—But man is but a patched fool if he will offer to say what methought I had. The eye of man hath not heard, the ear of

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man hath not seen, man's hand is not able to taste, his tongue to conceive, nor his heart to report what my dream was. I will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of this dream. It shall be called "Bottom's Dream," because it hath no bottom.

Shakespeare is craftily misquoting Paul's "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him." The power of apophatic rhetoric is that it is premised on God's existence, on his massive indescribability; it is language that merely fails. In Bottom's mouth, however, apophatic rhetoric quite possibly points to nothing: no man describe—can describe what? Well, Bottom cannot say, only that his dream is bottomless. This is a kind of secular revenge.

Yet this passage is not only secular mockery, either at the church's expense, or at Bottom's. We laugh because Bottom may be foolish, but we are moved, too: moved at the idea of the limitlessness of our visions. This is one of those utopian passages that are everywhere in Shakespeare, which gesture towards a better kingdom of the soul. Paul knows that God is known without words; Bottom knows that he has seen something, something he might have been and might yet be, and he cannot give it language—*yet*. So he will get Peter Quince to write a ballad of it. Shakespeare's remedy, as ever, is to add more words even as words fail.

A PRESENCE WHICH is full yet bottomless; but this bottomlessness may also be an abyss. There is a constant tension in Shakespeare, at the level of character and at the level of language, between abundance and dissolution. He writes verse so full of itself that it seems incapable of conceiving its opposite, its negative; and yet he, like many of his characters, distrusts words, and indeed sets words on each other so that language may crack. Many of Shakespeare's heroes and heroines are rhetoricians, unstoppable ones, who are searching for un-rhetorical or even anti-rhetorical truths. Hamlet is the great example; but Lear, too, sets in motion his own tragedy by staging a verbal contest whose outcome he must already know, and whose point is to separate honesty from ornamental rhetoric. Hotspur speaks beautiful verse but disdains "mincing poetry." Coriolanus despises "praises sauced with lies," and is unable to speak the flattering dialect of politics. His mother urges him to fake it, to speak those "words that are but roted [memorized] in/Your tongue, though but bastards and syllables/Of no allowance to your bosom's truth."

And Cleopatra, like Antony, drips a gorgeous rhetoric, but she is in fear of Caesar's language at the end of the play, fearful that he will seduce her with words to come to Rome: "He words me, girls, he words me." Again, the verb is a neologism: Shakespeare invents its usage in this case. How extraordinary that the great wordy poet had the resources to turn on himself, at the end of this most wordy of plays, and invent a verb that enshrines a fear and loathing of words! At the same time, however, this is another example of Shakespeare's tendency to turn negatives into positives: searching for a verb that captures Cleopatra's fear and disgust at Caesar's words, Shakespeare brings another word into life, and a word that is itself the very essence of language: "word." He is like someone throwing money at his own money to hide it.

Just as these characters are anti-rhetorical rhetoricians, so they are immensely powerful literary creations, the strongest and most vivid in literature, who are always in the process of dissolving. Writing about the individuality of Shakespearean character, Hazlitt remarked that while Chaucer's vivid people are largely

fixed essences, in Shakespeare "there is a continual composition and decomposition of . . . elements." Think of Othello, at Desdemona's deathbed: "I am he that was Othello." Or Antony, of whom Cleopatra optimistically says, at the start of the play: "Antony/Will be himself," yet who ends his life telling his servant Eros that "Here I am Antony/Yet cannot hold this visible shape." Or Macbeth, who is constantly gathering his shaky manhood, but who dies thinking of man as no more than a "walking shadow," a poor player. Or Coriolanus, of whom a Roman says: "He was a kind of nothing, titleless."

But of course these characters are most themselves as they are losing themselves. They do not dissolve into nothing so much as lengthen into bottomlessness. Shakespeare's language may be a clue to this paradox. For just as Shakespeare can only evoke lack by adding to the language, thereby turning abolition into extension, so perhaps Shakespeare's characters can only dissolve by enlarging—as Lear must rage on the heath, and travel through five acts, in order to be himself, or as Coriolanus ruins himself so that he might stand, at the end of the play, and call himself "author of himself." ■

Perfumed Rot

By FREDERICK BROWN

The Collaborator: The Trial and Execution of Robert Brasillach by Alice Kaplan

(University of Chicago Press, 308 pp., \$25)

BEGINNING WITH THE Revolution, when extremists propagated the myth that aristocrats were descended not from native Gauls but from a teutonic horde called the Franks, Germany played the part of kindred Outsider in a civil war whose episodes shaped French history for 150 years. Thus, for example, did Bismarck's army, after the armistice of 1871, camp around Paris as passive witnesses to the slaughter of Communards by French government troops who had invaded the capital. A generation later, Germany mutely observed the French nation split over Captain Dreyfus's alleged

treason and turn the energies of *revanchisme* inward, with Dreyfusards pitted against anti-Dreyfusards. The latter, never countenancing defeat, were able to avenge themselves behind the shield of their German overlord after 1940, when Vichy replaced the "Jewish, Masonic Republic."

From another perspective, this vexed complicity may be seen to reveal a people intermittently idealizing their neighbor, or seeking abroad certain qualities of mind, body, and soul that they miss at home. In *De l'Allemagne*, which helped to educate the French Romantics, Germaine de Staël paid tribute to a literature imbued with the Nordic genius for "feeling" (and so angered Napoleon that he had her work burned and exiled her from France). "Feeling," of the sort induced by continuous melody, was what drew Tout

FREDERICK BROWN is the author most recently of *Zola: A Life* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

Paris to performances of Wagner's *Ring* nearer the end of the century, during the Dreyfus Affair in fact, when Wagner reigned supreme at the Palais Garnier.

Of course, Germany exemplified not only imaginative boldness but also discipline, and the respect for authority, and the inculcation of scientific knowledge. These virtues furnish the program for national regeneration that Ernest Renan mooted in *La Réforme intellectuelle et morale*, following France's collapse in 1871. Hobbled by revolutionary precepts, by Catholic obscurantism, and by an educational system that treated science as a poor drudge in the house of classical rhetoric, France would not triumph, Renan declared, until it learned lessons from its conqueror. His prophecy, spoken at the birth of the Third Republic, was to be echoed, *mutatis mutandis*, at its demise, among Pétainist collaborators who accommodated all kinds of ill-assorted pieties in their pro-Germanism. "It seems to me that I have contracted a liaison with German genius, I shall never forget it," wrote Robert Brasillach, one such collaborator. "Not only does my reason tell me that one must do one's utmost to reach an understanding with Germany, but my heart marvels at the treasures of which it is the eternal custodian."

ROBERT BRASILLACH IS the man to whom Alice Kaplan refers in the title of *The Collaborator*. Much has been written about him since his execution for high treason on February 6, 1945, including books, tributes to the martyr, articles solicited by the *Société des amis de Robert Brasillach*, and a previous account of his trial. Unlike any number of vindictive hacks who welcomed the Nazi occupation as an opportunity to gain the prominence that had been denied them before the war, or to humiliate their betters, Brasillach, who had published several well-regarded novels, embraced fascism in the spirit of a true believer.

The ground for his faith may have been laid in November 1914 in Morocco, where Arthémile Brasillach, a lieutenant in the colonial infantry, was killed by Zayan rebels, leaving his four-year-old son to reconstruct him with a few sparse memories. Robert's mother, Marguerite, remarried in 1918; but if his stepfather, a military doctor named Maugis, did not have quite the same galling effect on him that General Aupick, a more infamous stepfather, had on Charles Baudelaire, neither did he ever become a comfortable presence. And what apparently made matters worse, to follow Maugis the family exchanged their home in Catalanian Perpignan, which was Brasillach country, for another in the somber

town of Sens, near Paris.

By then, Robert, who taught himself to read at the age of four and already devoured books, had found asylum from anxiety and loss on the perch of his imagination. Flouting received ideas about almost everything, he took after his mother, who became locally renowned for cocking snooks at the provincial society in which she was trapped, and sporting a bohemian aversion to its do's and its don'ts. The attic of their house was where Brasillach spent the happiest hours of his young life. With his sister Suzanne he improvised plays high above Sens, much as Flaubert had done on the stage of the family's billiard table in Rouen with sister Caroline. Time would show how theater never ceased to fascinate this illusionist afflicted with feelings of unreality, who would keep reinventing himself and who, though grateful for the protection that let him inhabit his garret playroom, loathed the bourgeois establishment beneath. He sympathized, he later wrote, with boys who "having reached what convention calls the age of reason, do not want to grow up, want to keep intact around themselves a beautiful but fleeting world, their toys, their young mothers."

WILLY-NILLY, HE SOON found himself torn from his mother and headed north on the high road of bourgeois expectations. As a sal-low, round-faced sixteen-year-old wearing owlsh spectacles, Brasillach took up residence in Paris at the elite lycée Louis-le-Grand to follow the draconian curriculum called *khâgne*, which prepared those who survived it for an even more elite institution, the Ecole Normale Supérieure. Louis-le-Grand's seventeenth-century quadrangle planted with acacias was at first almost all that a studious boarder saw of the city and of nature. But when he dared to venture forth on free days, the provincial discovered, as he remembers it in *Notre avant-guerre*, the pleasures of browsing at bookstalls along the Seine, seeing movies for the first time, dancing with proper girls at proper tearooms, studying improper ones at the Moulin Rouge, rowing in the Bois de Boulogne, spending evenings at the theater and scarfing down oysters afterward.

For stagecraft it was a remarkable age. Even with Jacques Copeau gone, talented *metteurs-en-scène* abounded, and first among them Charles Dullin, Louis Jouvet, Gaston Baty, and Georges Pitoëff, who gave the public exuberant repertoires to choose from. Pitoëff's *Hamlet* made an especially strong impression on young Brasillach, for all the obvious reasons. So did Claudel's *L'Annonce faite à Marie* and



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Pirandello's theater, of which Paris could not have enough during the 1920s.

What else he saw, very near at hand, were omens of civil strife in the form of *camelots du roi*—extreme right-wing militants, often armed with heavy canes, patrolling the Latin Quarter where *L'Action française*, the political movement they served, had a sizable constituency. The founder of the movement and its tutelary spirit was Charles Maurras, for whom the Dreyfus Affair, in which he had marshaled his polemical skills thirty years earlier, was still Armageddon. Sworn to this zealot, the vengeful brood upheld a doctrine that vilified the republic; blamed France's ills on the revolution, which had created an abstract or "legal" country in place of the "real" one; and therefore declared true patriots to be "obligatorily" royalist. France would be France again only when the democratic imposter had been abolished, the Bourbon pretender enthroned, and artificial politics replaced with a "natural" politics capable of honoring the "natural" or organic communities shaped by family, métier, religious tradition, and regional idiosyncrasy.

The observation of the historian Michel Winock that in late-nineteenth-century France one sector of public opinion embraced—as if the country were under siege—a nationalism "whose mission was to defend the cohesive social organism against modernity"—could equally have been made about France in the 1920s. That "obsidional" nationalism, he continues, oriented itself toward the interior and the past. "Beneath the political agenda one detected a spiritual reaction against decadence by people who understood the defense of French interests to be that of a completed civilization at war with the new mobility of things and beings."

BRASILLACH AT EIGHTEEN enjoyed an indiscriminately satirical paper such as *Le Canard enchaîné* more than *L'Action française* (the newspaper and the movement bore the same name), but something of the latter's humorless creed spoke to him, not least because his much-admired professor of French literature at Louis-le-Grand, André Bellesort, a future Academician, regularly extolled Maurras as a prose artist. The movement colored Brasillach's first political reflections, even when he showed no disposition to march under its banner beside certain classmates in demonstrations organized by Maurras: for example, the one celebrating Joan of Arc every year at her statue on the rue de Rivoli. "At Louis-le-Grand we couldn't find anything that represented patriotic

youth better than *L'Action française*, a kind of 'pre-fascism' that was already in the air, the union of a strong social doctrine and a national intelligence," he wrote in 1941, the "we" including his boon companions, Maurice Bardèche and Jacques Talagrand (better known by the pen name he later adopted, Thierry Maulnier), who would also subscribe to Vichy's "National Revolution."

Politics was less on their minds than Greek and Latin, and by 1928 the three young men successfully negotiated the difficult passage from Louis-le-Grand to the Ecole Normale Supérieure on the rue d'Ulm. Once admitted, the elect entered a kind of Rabelaisian Abbaye de Théâtres, minus women, a mandarin utopia where nothing was compulsory except taking end-of-year exams. One did as one wished, and the state attended to one's basic needs.

For Brasillach, who now lived in what he called "poetic anarchy," the new dispensation strongly resembled what he had known in early adolescence, with Paris replacing his garret stage. And the arrival of Suzanne Brasillach made the parallel easier to draw. "We were avid theatergoers and had discovered that the H bus, which stopped at the Ecole Normale, conveniently wended its way past the Odéon, the Vieux-Colombier, the Comédie Française, the Théâtre de Paris, the boulevard theaters, the Théâtre des Arts..." At this point Brasillach had no coherent parti-pris. Steeped in literature, he considered himself a man of letters rather than a political creature; and if the famous indictment of intellectuals promoting sectarian agendas in Julien Benda's *Le Trahison des clercs* (1927) did not sit quite right with him, neither could he have refuted it strenuously.

STILL, IT SOON became obvious that Brasillach was shaping his course in a particular ideological direction. In 1930, with Thierry Maulnier and Bardèche, he produced an issue of *L'Étudiant français*, which took its pitch from *L'Action française*. Through a prominent Catholic journalist named Henri Massis he met the literary editor of *L'Action française*, who read a book that Brasillach had just completed on Virgil and excerpted a chapter. One year later the twenty-two-year-old was invited to write a regular literary column for *L'Action*, and before long he attracted the notice of influential subscribers, among them George Bernanos.

In April 1930 he and his two close friends from Normale paid homage to the Count of Paris—the royal pretender—at his residence outside Brussels, and gazed starstruck on a face that seemed the very

image of a "Valois painted by Clouet." With so much extra-mural commotion, it was hardly surprising that Brasillach failed the comprehensive exam for a teaching post, the *agrégation*. The setback humbled him; but there was consolation to be found all around Paris, wherever bookstores displayed his *Présence de Virgile*, which appeared in 1931. Even as one career, in academia, was receding from view, another, in journalism, beckoned.

The biographical ruminations of *La Présence de Virgile* certainly say more about their author than about Virgil. Especially telling is the chapter entitled "La Terre et les Morts" ("The Soil and the Dead"), an expression borrowed from Maurice Barrès's novel of that name, in which Brasillach summons his contemporaries to transcend routine, disown a society governed by capital and dry jurisprudence, and seek salvation in love of country. Country is not an abstraction, he insists. It is a quasi-divine Self made from the flesh and bone of forebears. "The land we are part of is above all this well-worn landscape, these well-seasoned words, the supreme ease we feel in rediscovering a street corner, the corner of a sentence, the corner of a memory."

What this divinity required of those eligible to commune with it was not gold but blood, not the pedestrian arrangements favorable to, say, bourgeois engaged in commerce, but the deeds of young men prepared, like Virgil's heroes, to die in combat. Brasillach might have been echoing Mussolini's pronouncement: "Fascism respects the God of ascetics, saints, and heroes, and it also respects God as conceived by the ingenuous and primitive heart of the people." The Normalien turned his cultivated mind against intellect and intellectuals. From this conflict everything else flowed.

NOTWITHSTANDING HIS LOUD tattoos for the autonomous, creative individual untrammelled by law, Brasillach craved an identity rooted in the collective Fatherland and vouchsafed by a patriarch. Always the character in search of an author, he imagined self-realization as life lived in an hieratic order, with no room for the doubts that assailed him and, ultimately, no reason for an inner life. Belonging *ab origine* to the national family, like an aristocrat whose blood entitles him at birth, was inwardness enough.

The event that sealed his commitment to the cause of national regeneration took place in February 1934. On the sixth day of that month, thousands of right-wing demonstrators clashed violently with Parisian gendarmes and Republican guards. There had been riots during the

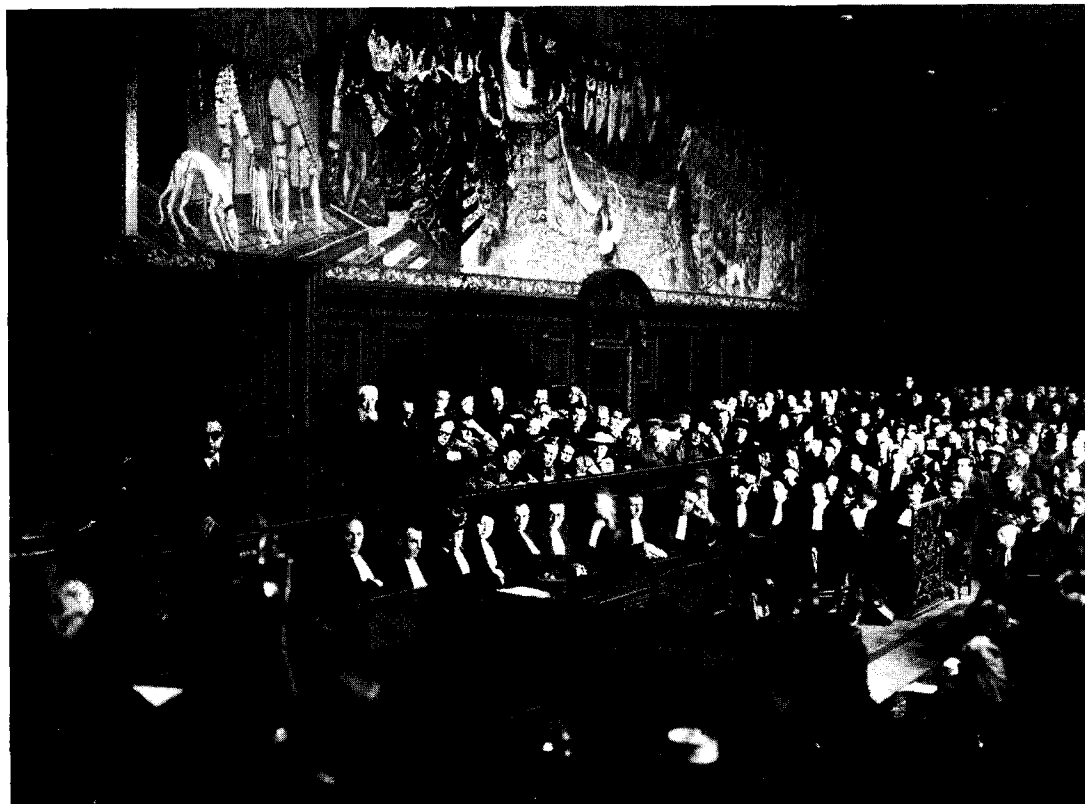
preceding weeks as the economic crisis, to which feckless administrations proved hopelessly unequal, grew deeper, and as charges of official turpitude flew thick and fast in the immediate aftermath of the so-called Stavisky Affair. A louche figure who moved among men of influence, Serge Alexandre Stavisky had organized various swindles with apparent impunity until January 1934, when he and the mayor of Bayonne, a legislative deputy, were accused of using Bayonne's municipal pawnshop to issue bonds secured by

whose allegiance to the Republic was notoriously half-hearted.

This sparked an uprising. On February 6, when the new government was making its first parliamentary appearance, hostile bands thronged toward the Place de la Concorde across the Seine from the Palais Bourbon in which the Chamber of Deputies had assembled. Police cordoned off the bridge, and a series of pitched battles ensued. While at the Palais Bourbon, Daladier shouted to make himself heard above nationalist deputies jeering him

guinary vision of an heroic world order became more explicitly identified with fascism. Any pretext to dilate upon Mussolini served, and after visiting Italy he returned to France a besotted partisan of Il Duce, in whose speeches he claimed to hear "the very accent" of ancient Rome. Mussolini was not only Europe's "greatest statesman," he was also a "great dramatic poet." His assertion that "in youth, loving life is giving it, offering it, being prodigal of it," and that every young man has a voice whispering *Tu Marcellus eris!* in the depths of his soul, seduced Brasillach. One hundred years earlier, when Paganini took Paris by storm, Balzac cried out for a leader capable of electrifying the nation as the virtuoso electrified his audience. In Brasillach's view, such a leader had appeared at last. "Fascism is the binding together in sheaves [*fascies*] of all the nation's energies," he wrote just before the outbreak of war. Strength, grandeur, a contempt for "bourgeois prejudice" and the "thick chattels" of this world: all were elements of what Brasillach liked to call "fascist joy."

Besides the literary chronicle in *L'Action française*, Brasillach wrote novels and co-authored a history of



The trial of Robert Brasillach (at left), January 19, 1945

fictitious assets. Before his trial Stavisky apparently committed suicide, but under circumstances that hinted at murder. Then a minister resigned after the publication in *L'Action française* of two letters in which he had vouched for Stavisky's bona fides some years earlier.

Right-wing papers exploited this comparatively minor fraud to cast suspicion on all of Republican officialdom, much as Edouard Drumont's *Libre parole* had done during the Panama Scandal of 1891. Once again anti-Semitism, finding all it needed in Stavisky's Russian-Jewish origins, nourished anti-parliamentarianism. Soon the premier, Camille Chautemps, who obstinately turned a deaf ear to demands for a government inquiry, fell from power. His replacement, Edouard Daladier, roused the opposition's anger with several maneuvers, but none more inflammatory than the dismissal of Jean Chiappe, the Corsican prefect of police,

and Communist deputies chanting the International. Guards who found themselves harried in the winter darkness began firing on a mob obviously determined to besiege the legislature as revolutionaries had done in 1848. By day's end, more than twenty people lay dead and almost 1,500 people lay wounded. "An immense hope had been born in blood, hope for the National Revolution," wrote Brasillach, who encountered crowds fleeing the battle scene when he came out of Juvet's Comédie des Champs-Élysées. It was an epiphany for him, a moment of sublime "sacrifice" that he would commemorate every year thereafter by placing a bouquet of violets near the fountain on Place de la Concorde. He remembered it as "an instinctive and magnificent revolt" and "the very birthday of our country's social nationalism."

In the literary chronicle that he wrote for *L'Action française*, Brasillach's san-

guary vision of an heroic world order became more explicitly identified with fascism. Any pretext to dilate upon Mussolini served, and after visiting Italy he returned to France a besotted partisan of Il Duce, in whose speeches he claimed to hear "the very accent" of ancient Rome. Mussolini was not only Europe's "greatest statesman," he was also a "great dramatic poet." His assertion that "in youth, loving life is giving it, offering it, being prodigal of it," and that every young man has a voice whispering *Tu Marcellus eris!* in the depths of his soul, seduced Brasillach. One hundred years earlier, when Paganini took Paris by storm, Balzac cried out for a leader capable of electrifying the nation as the virtuoso electrified his audience. In Brasillach's view, such a leader had appeared at last. "Fascism is the binding together in sheaves [*fascies*] of all the nation's energies," he wrote just before the outbreak of war. Strength, grandeur, a contempt for "bourgeois prejudice" and the "thick chattels" of this world: all were elements of what Brasillach liked to call "fascist joy."

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Not to be outdone by his fellow polemicists, Brasillach produced a column for *Je suis partout* called *Lettre à Angèle*, in which he regularly savaged leftist writers associated with the paper *Vendredi* and the Communist-backed Maison de la Culture. His animus against the bourgeois republic was his religion. It led him all over fascist Europe on pilgrimages to Italy, to Spain, and to Germany, where he attended the "Congress of Work" at Nuremberg. This last sojourn inspired a long article, "*Cent heures chez Hitler*," that fully reveals the connection in Brasillach between a passion for theater and an allegiance to fascism. The spectacle of a huge stadium full of celebrants exulting on cue whenever the Führer praised the German race thrilled him. As projectors sent light skyward in blue beams and thousands sang in chorus, he knew what it was to achieve, through this atrocious parody of the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, an operatic aggrandizement of Self.

Never had mere language made him feel as alive as did the "musical sorcery" without which "Germany could conceive nothing, neither religion, nor fatherland, nor war, nor politics, nor sacrifice." Any other theater seemed meager compared to the Nazi "theater of the masses," with its "monumental beauty," its "cathedral of light," its "perfectly ordered movements," its "music and song." It was not empty show, Brasillach assured his readers. "It is all founded on a doctrine, an intelligence, a sensibility, and these grandiose spectacles are bound to a representation of the world, to rock-solid ideas about the value of life and death."

WHEN LIFE AND death became the matter in 1938 and 1939, *Je suis partout*, whose circulation soared, vehemently argued for collaboration with Germany against an international Jewish-capitalist trust that stood to profit from war. Brasillach, like Céline, seemed more alert to the danger of Semitic genes "invading" French racial purity than to the prospect of a Nazi juggernaut. But it was the Nazi juggernaut that took Lieutenant Brasillach prisoner in June 1940. After the Phoney War, his unit was encircled and marched off to an internment camp in Westphalia, where he stayed—not unhappily: he claimed to have a vocation for prison life—until April 1941, despite efforts by the Vichy government to have him repatriated straightaway. Even before leaving Westphalia, he had sent *Je suis partout* a long article in which Pétain was eulogized, and England was portrayed as perfidious Albion, France's true enemy, and the argument was made again for partnership with Nazi Germany. Brasillach formulated an oxy-

moronic slogan, "loyal collaboration," that aimed to legitimate his subsequent misdeeds. He was known as an inveterate punster.

The heroes and the villains whom Brasillach paraded through this article made up the cast of a medieval drama whose ritual tableaux were sufficient material for the political commentary in his weekly column. When Germany invaded Russia, it was the Teutonic Knights fighting the infidel. When Vichy honored Joan of Arc, it was Pétain, who embodied France's guardian principles, defending the nation against English gold. Eventually Brasillach replaced Pierre Gaxotte as editor-in-chief and set his staff an example with his ornately vicious rhetoric. He became famous for it. Here, in an article entitled "The Anti-Fascist Conspiracy at the Service of the Jew," which appeared on February 7, 1942, is how he denounced the republic:

Will an end finally be put to those whiffs of perfumed rot we still get from the moribund old slut, the syphilitic whore reeking of patchouli oil and leukorrheac ooze, the Republic still displaying her wares on the sidewalk? She is still there, at her doorway, all wrinkles, but surrounded by her pimps and dogged toy-boys . . . She has served them so well, tucked so many banknotes in her garters for them, how could they have the heart to desert her, cankered though she is?

Just as the anti-Dreyfusards, half a century earlier, invoked Félicien Rops's etching *Pornocracy*—which showed a naked, blindfolded courtesan led by piglets on a leash—to picture the hated republic, so Brasillach, who may have died a virgin, coupled the destructive allurements of venal women with the rapacious schemes of world Jewry. *Je suis partout*, which the German authorities never starved for paper or newsprint, regularly demonized Jews; and although Brasillach's posthumous advocates have argued that he did not want them massacred, he certainly wanted them exorcized. "The Jewish problem must be settled because the Jew is the foreigner, because he is the enemy, because he has steered us into war," he insisted on June 2, 1941. "Until it is settled, we shall persevere." There can be no hope, he wrote almost a year later, "so long as antifascism remains the only passion French politicians are capable of, so long as they have the leisure to freely voice this passion, so long as they serve the Jew by more or less surreptitious means, so long as the democracy that protects the Jew is venerated, so long as the most absurd legalism provides a screen for corrupt enterprises."

In Brasillach's morality play, the Jew was one of several evil masks arrayed against Pétain the Christian knight. "On one side we have England, English gold, the ignoble emigrants, Jews, lunatics. On the other, we have the Marshal." Summarizing his creed, he declared that what young fascists desire is "a pure nation, a pure history, a pure race." Where they thrive, he went on, is among one another, in "immense armies of men" whose "rhythmic movements" unite them "like the pulsations of one vast heart." They do not believe in "the dictatorship of profit." They believe "in hierarchy," but "they believe that all must have their place in this hierarchy. They do not believe in the justice that breeds endless verbiage but in the justice that prevails by might. And they know that from might springs joy." Such joy was incomprehensible to "the gaunt, judeo-socialist conspirator," to the "consumer of apéritifs, of parliamentary motions and compromises."

AN IMBROGLIO RESULTED in Brasillach's departure from *Je suis partout* in 1943. By then it was clear that his was a lost cause, and that in postwar France he would be held accountable not only for his odious polemics but also for his comportment in the world at large. He had been pleased to attend garden parties at the Institut allemand, where mingling with other apologists of fascist joy helped him to gain favor. In October 1941 he had accepted an invitation to attend a "Congress of European Writers" in Weimar and toured Berlin as well, all under the auspices of Goebbels's Ministry of Public Enlightenment and Propaganda. Worst of all, he had visited the Legion of French Volunteers fighting in German uniform against Soviet Russia on the Eastern front.

Those were the tin cans that rattled behind Brasillach after 1943, when he increasingly sought refuge from politics in literature. (During the invasion of Normandy he visited the Bibliothèque nationale almost every day to work on translations of classical Greek poetry for a commissioned anthology.) The protests that Brasillach uttered at that eleventh hour, such as they were, presented his ruined world as the victim of a philistine enemy, England and America, which was bent on destroying the treasures that made France an aesthete's paradise. But this was one aesthete who did not abhor ruins. On the contrary. To the *horrible quotidien* of peacetime, with its commonplace joys and its reliable banalities, he ardently preferred the apocalyptic moment that announced a beginning or an end. Paris was most beautiful in his eyes when, in August 1944, doomsday

approached. "For the rest of my life I'll retain the memory of an unreal landscape, lit by flashes of a gathering storm, but marvelously soft, like something out of Tintoretto's most beautiful paintings."

THE REST OF Brasillach's life, which is the heart of Alice Kaplan's vivid and absorbing narrative, lasted only another five or six months. After the liberation he went into hiding, but he surrendered upon learning that his mother had been arrested in his stead. Those accused of collaboration would be tried in Courts of Justice established by the Free French Resistance Council under General de Gaulle for what came to be known as the *Epuración*, or "the Purge." The charge brought against Brasillach derived from an article of the penal code requiring that "any Frenchman who in wartime undertook intelligence with a foreign power or its agents, with a view to favoring the enterprises of this power against France" be put to death.

Together with other alleged collaborators he was interned at Fresnes, the infamous prison south of Paris where many Resistance fighters had awaited execution or deportation during the war. There, in a kind of logorrheic frenzy, he poured forth memoirs, journal entries, poems, and a self-exculpatory dialogue called *Étéocle et Polynice*, after Oedipus's factious sons, in which Pétain-Eteocles declares that he abetted De Gaulle-Polynices by preserving, hostage though he was, a French house under whose roof the Resistance found shelter.

This ludicrous conceit served in much the same way as his slogan "loyal collaboration": the former argued solidarity with virtue where none had ever existed, the latter denied complicity with evil where facts argued otherwise. And both betrayed a lack of whatever might have helped Brasillach recognize—Brasillach the actor, the sophist, the punster, the knavish man-child—that words can kill. Perceiving himself to be unreal, he never comprehended the gravitas of language. At his trial the prosecutor would call him a "moral monster."

His trial (for which he prepared by organizing a kind of moot court with fellow prisoners) took place on January 19, 1945, when war still raged several hundred miles to the east. Besides the judge or "president," Maurice Vidal, and four jurors, all *résistants*, it featured no witnesses, only three supremely articulate men: the defense attorney, Jacques Isorni, who would in due course defend Pétain; the prosecutor, Marcel Reboul, who had already brought death sentences down upon eight members of the so-called French Gestapo; and Brasillach,

who regarded the trial as a star turn to be enjoyed, Wilde-like, at the expense of his interrogator. "Isorni's job," writes Kaplan, "would be to define Brasillach as a poet, a man of letters, a French national treasure whose life could not be extinguished without irreparable damage to the nation. Reboul's job would be to counter that definition: Brasillach was not a poet, he was a propagandist for the enemy, a turncoat." Reboul understood that any victory for him would be pyrrhic. "Either he would be remembered as the man who had spared the life of France's most prominent Nazi intellectual or as the man who had sentenced a writer to death."

About the trial, which Kaplan analyzes very perceptively, it suffices to say that Brasillach made Vidal's ham-handed interrogation work to the advantage of a defense that was predicated on the moral equivalence of collaboration and resistance, but was then nailed by Reboul, who knew *Je suis partout* inside out. Armed with Brasillach's diatribes calling for the mass deportation of Jews and the purge of notorious antifascists—Third Republic ministers and deputies, Gaullists, Communists—he drove home the point that such denunciations had not been without consequence, that they were in fact as criminal as the crimes they encouraged.

Reboul also managed to extract from Brasillach's journalism rhapsodic metaphors that strongly suggest a homoerotic fascination with the powerful invader. Was there a bit of buggery concealed inside his paens to "fascist joy"? As Kaplan notes, just after an occupation that had left many Frenchmen, especially defeated veterans, feeling emasculated, nothing could have swayed the male jury against Brasillach more effectively than this innuendo. Isorni spoke eloquently, but not well enough to save his client. The jury deliberated only twenty minutes before finding the defendant guilty, and Vidal read the death sentence in a chaotic courtroom filled with Brasillach's vociferous supporters.

DE GAULLE HAD NOT yet opened the file when a petition for clemency began circulating among writers and intellectuals. Its most notable sponsor was François Mauriac, the frequent object of Brasillach's sadistic banter, who had credentials as a *résistant* to bolster the pleas that he repeatedly made on behalf of collaborators. (So many, in fact, that wags dubbed him "Saint Francis of Assizes.") Even earlier, during Brasillach's trial, he had offered the defendant absolution in the form of a letter that Isorni read out loud. Declaring

that there had been no verified instance of an arrest provoked by denunciations in *Je suis partout*, he supplemented this claim, as if aware of its fraudulence, with a natalist variation of what Roger Shattuck, in "De Gaulle and the Intellectuals," called "the aesthetic alibi."

However despicable Brasillach's polemics, Mauriac wrote, the unborn works that he would surely father for France's artistic patrimony deserved the right to live. "If the Court judges that in politics, he was a passionate and blind disciple, that he was caught up in a system of ideas, an implacable logic, when he was still very young, it will perhaps attach some importance to the testimony of a man, a writer, whom Brasillach treated as an enemy and who thinks nonetheless that it will be a loss for French letters if this brilliant mind is forever extinguished," Mauriac declared. He seems to have been much taken with *Notre avant-guerre*, a book of memoirs which stands as Brasillach's most durable work.

IN THAT POLITICALLY fraught world, where neutral ground was untenable, the support of famous signatories who had played it safe (at best) during the occupation—Claudel, Valéry, Colette, Anouilh, Derain, Vlamincq, Cocteau—made little difference. One name that weighed more heavily in the balance was that of Albert Camus, who, with grave misgivings, signed the petition out of a principled opposition to capital punishment.

I've always held the death penalty in horror and judged that, at least as an individual, I couldn't participate in it, even by abstention. That's all. And this is a scruple that I suppose would make Brasillach's friends laugh. It is not for him that I join my signature to yours [another of the petition's sponsors, Marcel Aymé]. It is not for the writer, whom I consider insignificant. Nor for the individual, whom I despise with all my heart and soul. If I had ever been tempted to take some interest in him, the memory of two or three of my friends who were mutilated or gunned down by Brasillach's friends while his newspaper encouraged them to do it would have prevented me.

Believing, as he later wrote, that "talent confers responsibility," De Gaulle, unlike Mauriac, offered no absolution. On February 6, 1945, the eleventh anniversary of the failed insurrection that had given Brasillach martyrs to identify with, he was taken to the fort at Montrouge and shot by a firing squad. ■

The Founding Swindlers

By ALAN TAYLOR

The Fabulous History of the Dismal Swamp Company: A Story of George Washington's Times by Charles Royster

(Alfred A. Knopf, 622 pp., \$35)

THE GREAT PLANTERS of eighteenth-century Virginia have long enjoyed a romantic and patriotic aura for living in grand mansions and for leading the American Revolution to victory. Freshly painted and carefully manicured, the great colonial houses—including Monticello, Mount Vernon, and the array at Colonial Williamsburg—shimmer in our eyes and our imaginations as pristine stages for the lost world of our moral and political superiors. The heroic version of the Founding Fathers dates to the new generation of the early nineteenth century. In 1817 William Wirt, an ambitious Virginia lawyer, wrote a fawning history of Patrick Henry and his compatriots. Wirt demanded: “Were not these men, giants in mind and heroism? Compared with them, what is the present generation, but a puny race of dwarfs and pigmies?”

We continue to ask the same self-flagellating question. But Charles Royster quotes Wirt for ironic effect, because his “fabulous history” leads us into the private lives and the sordid business practices of the Virginia gentry, which in his account was a vast interlocking web of illusions, deceptions, and evasions. Royster depicts the standard great events of eighteenth-century America, including the Seven Years War, the colonial resistance to British taxes, the War for Independence, and the new republic; but, as if by shifting our lens, these affairs of state appear greatly reduced in grandeur because they are yoked and subordinated to the wheeling and dealing that usually preoccupied the gentry. Cast in a harsh new light, eighteenth-century Virginia reappears as a tawdry landscape of human folly. Royster describes Norfolk, for example, as the very

antithesis of our pristine Colonial Williamsburg:

Flimsy new buildings lined crooked, narrow, dirt streets. . . . New clapboard warehouses among the wharves—some stood three stories high—were bigger than most residences and stores but just as ugly. Construction followed no design, creating a maze of lanes and alleys. Raw sewage ran in open ditches bridged by narrow planks. Near the river a stench hung over the city, especially at low tide.

Royster is an accomplished scholar and writer. Each of his three previous books was a profound meditation on warfare and the American character. In his new book, Royster turns from war to land speculation to find a new key to our national origins. He astutely demonstrates that land speculation consumed the eighteenth-century American elite, including the republic’s great men: George Washington, Patrick Henry, Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, Alexander Hamilton, Aaron Burr, James Wilson, Robert Morris. But more often than not, their estates eventually collapsed into bankruptcy, almost invariably because of excessive speculations in poor locations, such as the Great Dismal Swamp.

Eighteenth-century fortunes rested on shaky foundations of bad debts. They were owed to, and owed by, every man of apparent property and probity. Prominent Virginians procrastinated on paying their debts, while living well and compulsively adding new debts to build an expending network of undercapitalized land companies. Robert Beverly, a leading Virginian, explained that his people lived by “being in Debt & making great Promises for the future.” Surely, they reasoned, the next, bigger land speculation would recoup every gamble and retire every debt in one colossal score. The grandest speculations involved millions of acres and functioned like pyramid schemes, requiring new marks to invest at a premium before the

original debt became due. In the end, almost no one—except lawyers such as Wirt—outran the approaching wave of destructive debt. Eventually, impatient and desperate creditors consigned a surprising number of apparently wealthy gentlemen to a debtors’ prison or a dotage of genteel poverty.

EXPLOITING THEIR POLITICAL connections, eighteenth-century gentlemen cheaply purchased government titles to thousands of acres of Indian lands. After expelling the natives, the speculators expected to grow rich by retailing lots to the common settlers, who turned the forest into productive farmland. On the edge of a fertile continent, with a population doubling every twenty-five years, American land speculation seemed a sure path to riches—provided the locations were good. As a young man, George Washington recognized that “the greatest Estates we have in this Colony were made . . . by taking up & purchasing at very low rates the rich back Lands which were thought nothing of in those days, but are now the most valuable Lands we possess.” Resolved to become richer, Washington accumulated political offices and allies, obtaining the leverage to procure an array of lands in the Great Dismal Swamp and on the western frontier in the Ohio valley.

To curry favor with the imperial government, colonial land speculators usually promised that their schemes would lead to the massive cultivation of hemp (which governments valued to make rope for shipping, rather than dreaded as marijuana for smoking). Almost nothing came of these projects, because Russian hemp remained cheaper and better for rope; but the colonial speculators kept patriotically promising to save the Royal Navy from its dependence on a foreign supplier. So characteristic of their age, the hemp projects combined pipe-dreams with remarkably detailed (albeit wildly unrealistic) calculations of all the (small) costs and (stupendous) benefits.

The projectors even saw an opportunity in the Great Dismal Swamp, a watery tract of approximately 900 square miles located along the Virginia-North Carolina border. The swamp both alarmed and intoxicated visitors. “Moving into the swamp,” Royster writes, “one waded in standing water the color of tea. Farther in, bamboo among the trees grew more thickly. Vines climbed trunks and hung from branches above huge, intricate ferns. Clouds of mosquitoes were so large as to make it hard to guess what kept all of them alive.” The Great Dismal Swamp hosted a complex and intense array of vibrant life and frequent death:

ALAN TAYLOR is professor of American history at the University of California at Davis. He is the author of *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (Knopf).

In the night, frogs and bats consumed part of the vast population of insects. In summer, blood-sucking horse flies swarmed. Large mosquitoes hovered in thick clouds. Barred owls preyed on shrews and mice. . . . Dense growths of tall bamboo hung in broad arches. On these, snakes sometimes sunned themselves—copperheads or a water snake exposing its bright red underside. Water snakes consumed fish and fell prey in turn to long king snakes.

In the teeming and predatory swamp, Royster finds a metaphor for the tangled connections and unscrupulous intrigues of the Virginia elite.

With good cause, colonial farmers bypassed the Great Dismal Swamp to settle on drier and more elevated lands. But all of that cheap real estate, so conveniently close to the seaport at Norfolk, teased the greedy imaginations of ambitious men, who calculated the profits of draining the swamp to procure fertile farmland for retail sale to farmers. Here, Royster hints, lie the origins of the enduring American talent for selling swampland, bridges, and websites to dupes.

DURING THE 1720s, the great planter and writer William Byrd first proposed to drain and clear the swamp by employing enslaved Africans to dig ditches and to fell the immense trees, producing boards, shingles, pine tar, hemp, cattle, and more slaves as byproducts. Nothing came of this project until 1763—nearly two decades after Byrd's death—when twelve grandees, including George Washington, founded the Dismal Swamp Company. They promised to raise hemp, and persuaded the colony of Virginia to grant them title to the swamp, and assembled fifty slaves to dig and chop amidst clouds of voracious insects. Over the next decade, their hard labor made barely a dent in the immense and resistant landscape, which consumed slave lives and the money of the Dismal Swamp Company. The slaves produced bundles of shingles and clapboards, but almost no hemp and little drained land.

The War of the Revolution dispersed the slaves and paralyzed the company, as some partners embraced and led the American independence movement, while others remained loyal to the British empire. Revived during the late 1780s, the Dismal Swamp Company continued to drain the partners of funds rather than the swamp of water. Fed up, Washington sold his shares, seemingly for a great profit. Of course, the buyer was yet another speculator who never paid his debt, eventually obliging the frustrated Washington to reclaim the shares. By abandoning land-

draining in favor of timber-cutting, the company at last began to turn a profit in 1810—eleven years after Washington's death.

THE DISMAL SWAMP COMPANY is less the subject of Royster's book than a useful vehicle for him to pursue a kaleidoscopic array of apparent digressions suggested by fortuitous, and often tenuous, connections to the twelve partners and dozens of their friends, relatives, acquaintances, and enemies. For most of this big book, the swamp and the company recede into the background as hundreds of stray threads accumulate to become the real fabric of the book. Ranging far beyond the swamp, the company, and Virginia, Royster's narration extends around and across the Atlantic to the West Indies, West Africa, the Gulf of St. Lawrence, London, and the coal mines of Wales.

Francis Farley was a West Indian sugar planter, and because he invested in the Dismal Swamp, Royster promptly finds an invitation to describe, in succession and great detail, the Caribbean island of Antigua; the processes of cultivating cane and making sugar; the island's seaport; and Farley's brothers. A decade later, Farley's daughter Eleanor married Captain John Laforey, of the Royal Navy—which leads Royster to recount the Captain's prior naval career, including a very particular version of the British conquest of the French fortress of Louisburg on Cape Breton Island in 1758. Two other company partners, the merchants Anthony Bacon and Samuel Gist, moved to England—which encourages Royster to explore insurance underwriting, Parliamentary politics, and the London stage. In addition to the melodramatic Sarah Siddons, the celebrated performers included "the Amazing Learned Pig," who used his mouth to arrange cards bearing letters and numbers into apparent answers to questions.

Few of these far-flung people, places, and animals directly bear upon Royster's starting point, the Dismal Swamp Company—to which he sporadically returns to start a fresh chain of distant connections. He entitles one chapter, "The Last Voyage of the Slave Ship *Hope*," but the vessel merely provides a nicely ironic name and a shaggy dog for the chapter's rambling narrative. One third of the way into the chapter, the ship becomes wrecked off the coast of Africa, far short of its Virginia destination; and the chapter proceeds without the ship, and discusses a royal governor of Virginia; spring flooding in the colony; the trade in convicted English felons; a depression in London trade; a hurricane in Antigua; and the provocative British

tax on tea shipped to the colonies.

Royster sets aside no fact and no anecdote. He seems to weave every one of his research notes into his book, which often turns thick and heavy, given the prodigious dimensions of his learning and research. Readers must frequently explore dense thickets of obscure names and extraneous details.

As Gist grew acquainted with his fellow underwriters, he could survey the room and review any number of stories telling how diverse men had come to Lloyd's: Samuel Chollet, once Bourdieu's clerk, now his partner; Robert Bogle, Sr., in the Virginia trade; Joshua Mendes da Costa, who subscribed policies in the Portuguese trade and others; William Devaynes, newly returned from the Gold Coast and soon to be director of the East India Company; John Nutt, heavily involved in the Georgia and South Carolina trade; John Shoolbred, not yet thirty, like Angerstein a rapidly rising young man, cutting an ever bigger figure in the Canada trade and the African slave trade; a merchant in Mark Lane with Shoolbred, the policy broker Thomas Bell, not to be mistaken for Captain Thomas Bell, a merchant and insurance broker in Aldermanbury near St. Paul's, who "had the Good Luck to be call'd Honest Thom Bell, in Distinction to another who frequented Loyds Coffee House."

Except for Gist, none of these men invested in the Dismal Swamp Company, and few reappear again in Royster's book. Such passages, replete with asides, comprise most of the book.

CONFRONTED WITH DISPARATE details from the past, historians ordinarily must make hard choices: what to omit and what to include; and in what sequence. In their choices, historians exemplify their fundamental assumptions and their governing ideas. But Royster seems to have decided against selectivity itself. His book is itself a swamp. He presents an almost indiscriminate mass of detail with little apparent direction or cohesion other than a loose adherence to chronology and some tenuous connections back to the Dismal Swamp Company. Experimenting in a free-form history without an overt argument, Royster resists the temptation to explain his evidence, his methods, and his conclusions. He provides no commentary and no analysis that might frame the beginnings and the endings of his chapters, to guide readers. There is no introduction and there is no conclusion. There is only the big baggy story.

Writing ominously and allusively, Royster hints and teases without committing

himself. On January 1, 1777, William Byrd Jr., a member of the company, died of unknown cause. Many years later, a friend named David Meade vaguely lamented Byrd's gambling for leading to "poverty, want, misery and often suicide." Royster cryptically adds, "This was as close as Meade could bring himself to recording that Byrd had killed himself, and Meade came closer than anyone else." And this is as close as Royster comes to telling us whether or not Byrd committed suicide. Later, in discussing the unpopularity of the new Federal Constitution in much of rural Virginia, Royster remarks, "During the war, the Virginia authorities had thought Nansemond [County] people were Tories, while the British had considered them rebels. Electing delegates to the ratifying convention, they did not expect impending ruin and anarchy in the absence of the new Constitution, or they did not care." Or Royster does not care. Here, as throughout, the style is breezy, evocative, neutral, a tad cynical. The whole thing is just a little too much fun for its own good.

My guess is that Royster's indifference to structure and contention, and his Rabelaisian appetite for detail, is not just a matter of self-indulgence. It is also a matter of design: he wants his readers to make their own sense of the whole through immersion in the particulars, or to give up in confusion. Royster seems determined to counter the dominant mode of scholarship where a hard and repetitive argument (usually derivative from, or hostile to, some other historian's argument) overwhelms the many nuances in the historical context. And so Royster provides nuances and context in lavish abundance—and nothing more.

STILL, THERE ARE patterns and meanings that emerge from the soup. Royster's seemingly erratic wandering through topics, places, and names implicitly highlights the integration of the eighteenth-century Atlantic world through the nexus of sailing ships and correspondence. The steady circulation of people, news, and goods linked London underwriters, African slave merchants, West Indian sugar planters, Royal Navy captains, and Virginia land speculators in complex webs of credit and debt. The schemes and evasions of Virginians echoed around the Atlantic rim.

Balm in Gilead

"Is there no balm in Gilead?" So cries dour Jeremiah in granite tones.
"There is no balm in Gilead," replies a Negro Spiritual. The baritone

who chants it, leaning forward on the platform, looks up, not knowing his voice is a rainstorm that rinses air to reveal earth's surprises:
Today, the summer gone, four monarch butterflies,

their breed's survivors, sucked a flower's last blooms, opened their wings, orange-and-black stained-glass, and printed on the sky in zigzag lines:
watch bright things rise: winter moons; the white undersides of the California condor once thought doomed
now flapping wide like the first bird from ashes.

Grace Schulman

Patient readers will also detect the intricate interconnections of the Virginia gentry families through both marriage and investments in interlocking land speculations. Newly arrived in Virginia, a young woman warned her sister, "[The Virginians] are all Brothers, Sisters, or Cousins; so that if you use one person in the Colony ill, you affront all." Marriages built family alliances that encouraged the construction of land companies. Thus Dr. Thomas Walker—to choose one example out of many—married a cousin to George Washington, whose sister married Fielding Lewis. All three men became partners in the Dismal Swamp Company. Along with John Robinson and Peter Jefferson (Thomas's father), Dr. Walker also founded the far more ambitious Loyal Company, which meant to monopolize Virginia's western lands, including much of Kentucky. Lewis and Washington invested in the rival Ohio Company with equally colossal ambitions. Royster remarks, "Had Virginia's land companies been a spiderweb, Dr. Walker would have been the spider." And so would John Robinson or George Washington.

Although Royster scrupulously avoids offering editorial comments, he does employ, as a sort of Greek chorus, a succession of quotations that reiterate his apparent themes: that nothing was what it seemed; that everyone chronically deceived himself and cheated others; that it was only the pursuit of money (and the evasion of debt) that finally mattered to anybody eighteenth-century Britain and its colonies. In 1768 a royal official announced that "the Rapacity of the Land Jobbers in Virginia is insatiable." During the 1780s, a traveler insisted that Virginia's frontier

settlers were "abused by the dreams of enthusiasts, and the falsehoods of knaves." In 1789 a Frenchman described Virginians as "indolent, unindustrious, poor credit risks, big gamblers, tricksters." Lamenting corruption in the House of Burgesses, one member assured an outsider: "You know little of the Plots, Schemes, and Contrivances that are carried on there; in short, one holds the Lamb while the other skins; many of the Members are in Places of Trust and Profit, and others want to get in, and they are willing to assist one another in passing their Accounts." With more concise wit, William Byrd observed, "Our land produces all the fine things

of Paradise, except innocence."

Royster also conveys his historiographical sensibility by narrating with evident delight the disasters reaped by almost all of his characters as the fruits of their delusions. In grim detail, a succession of company partners succumb to drink, insanity, death, and bankruptcy. In 1766 a judgmental bolt of lightning destroyed six warehouses, stuffed with merchandise, all the property of Robert Tucker, a Norfolk merchant and a partner in the Dismal Swamp Company. Shattered, Tucker promptly lost his sanity and dwindled into a death that revealed an insolvency at odds with his conspicuous display of wealth. Conveniently for Royster, another member of the company observed, as Tucker's obituary, "We are often deceived by Appearances."

ONE OF THE book's running sardonic jokes is the naïveté of all its characters, who foolishly assume that their partners, debtors, or marks are somehow more solvent—despite the insistent evidence revealed at every death that everyone milked his credit far beyond any sane limit. The most notorious failure was John Robinson, the consummate Virginia politician of the 1750s and 1760s. As both the speaker of the House of Burgesses and the treasurer of the colonial government, Robinson controlled patronage, funding, and oversight: a reckless combination. In 1766, his death exposed his estate to a scrutiny that revealed his embezzlement of 100,000 pounds in public funds, which Robinson had loaned, usually without security, to his friends. No wonder he had been the most popular man in the colony.

Almost all of the book's characters belonged to the genteel classes of enhanced status and sufficient credit to live in the grand style. Ordinary folk, including slaves, appear only occasionally and by indirection—as the objects of elite action or neglect. The few who receive names and characterization merely display scruffier versions of the elite vices. In 1764 the individual partners provided slaves to the company: “Robert Burwell offered a couple in their twenties: Jack and his wife, Venus. Jack was tall and slim, Venus short and stout. They had in common a gift for fast, smooth talk. They did not look like people who would devote themselves to draining a swamp; they looked like people Burwell wished to get rid of at his partners’ expense.” On the one hand, Royster avoids the cant of finding noble resistance in every slave. On the other hand, he never detects it in any slave. Mostly he does not bother with them.

As the narrative roams around the Atlantic, Royster finds human nature much the same in all settings and among all peoples, slave or free, African or European. On the western coast of Africa, the native Fante merchants eagerly and shrewdly bartered slaves to the British, often getting the best of the competition to cheat one another. A British official considered the Fante “the most rapacious set of People on earth,” which was quite a compliment, given the competition from London underwriters and Virginia speculators. Another worsted Briton whined that the Fante “think it meritorious to Cheat a White man all that lyes in their power.”

IN EFFECT, ROYSTER establishes a moral equivalency between every people, at the lowest common denominator. For this reason, the great political transformations of the eighteenth century appear trivial: mere variations on the theme of universal human corruption. In Royster’s narration, the Revolutionary War was primarily an orgy of plundering, burning, and cheating—an escalation of previous forms of bad behavior. Colonel Fielding Lewis complained that “every man now tries to ruin his neighbour.” The revolution’s rhetoric of collective self-sacrifice quickly proved a hollow sham. Immediately after the war, Royster notes, “Many Virginians resumed the habit of spending more money than they possessed; while others newly experimented with buying more than they could afford.” The more things changed, the more they stayed the same. The vices just kept on exceeding themselves.

The revolution established an independent American republic, of course—but this merely enhanced the ambitious and

destructive scams of land speculators and commercial profiteers. Royster describes the new polity as a conclave of con-men: “Charles William Janson arrived in America from England in the summer of 1793. Thirteen years later, he realized that he had been duped at every turn.” Under the new regime, as under the old regime, elections pivoted on vice rather than virtue. In 1794 Francis Walker, the alcoholic son of Dr. Thomas Walker, ran for Congress from Virginia but lost. Royster wryly observes that “a shrewd candidate kept the voters drunk, not himself.”

Robert Morris dominates the last two chapters, even though the Dismal Swamp Company was virtually the only speculative venture into which he did *not* plunge. A wealthy Philadelphia merchant and a United States senator, Morris pursued riches on a continental scale. During the early 1790s, with two equally reckless partners, Morris tried to corner the market on real estate in the new national capital, Washington City. The partners also cheaply purchased over six million acres of frontier land—mostly swamps and barren mountains—in scattered tracts from Georgia to Pennsylvania. Quantity mattered more than quality, for Morris expected to unload his holdings on distant and naïve Europeans who had never seen the tracts. Paying little or nothing down, Morris and his partners counted on selling for a profit before their debts became due. When Europeans refused to play the fool, the American partners were left holding the bag. In 1798 Morris lost his credit and landed in Philadelphia’s prison for debtors, where he remained for three years.

Royster has written an ingenious but often opaque satire on both the artificiality of eighteenth-century life and the futility of standard scholarship to capture the delusions of the past. Consider the book’s title. *The Fabulous History of the Dismal Swamp Company: A Story of George Washington’s Times* cleverly resembles the misleading prospectus of an eighteenth-century land speculation that

promises fields of hemp but delivers a swamp. For *The Fabulous History* is only sporadically about the Dismal Swamp Company; and Washington looms no larger than another twenty characters; and there is none of the plot structure, building to a transforming climax, that usually characterizes “a story.”

So is *The Fabulous History* a sort of swindle? Not exactly. In quoting David Hume, Royster comes closest to explaining his book. Noting the political opportunist John Wilkes, Hume sarcastically observed that “I am delighted to see the daily and hourly Progress of Madness and Folly and Wickedness in England. The Consummation of these Qualities are the true Ingredients for making a fine Narrative in History.” Taking Hume literally, Royster pursues that dictum throughout his huge volume, filling the pages with unrelieved human folly. The blizzard of names, places, dates, events, companies, and schemes eventually blurs into a common mass of corruption and waste. Minor variations on the same basic themes, the dozens of characters eventually become a composite: the land speculator as addicted gambler. Robert Morris just happened to live a generation after William Byrd; and George Washington was no better than Samuel Gist.

The immediate impact is often amusing or sobering, but finally the repetition becomes deadening. Indeed, Royster’s cumulative effect perversely vindicates the Virginia elite. If no better than anybody else, they were at least no worse, given the pervasively lousy state of humanity. If the Virginians cannot be awarded praise for, say, the Declaration of Independence, they also cannot be faulted for cheating their creditors and keeping slaves. They were simply acting out their very human nature. In the end, we are left with a version of the conventional (and deeply unsatisfying) apology for wayward American politicians: that everyone does it. ■

CORRESPONDENCE

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research process through restrictive licensing agreements—similarly may have a retarding influence on the pace of scientific progress. This notion was advanced by Michael Heller and Rebecca Eisenberg in the May 1, 1998, issue of *Science* magazine.

We should be concerned about any proposals that encourage researchers to leave our public universities. Such proposals not infrequently contain elements that

urge researchers to behave just like their commercial counterparts, encouraging them to acquire patents and engage in technology-transfer agreements with for-profit entities. Not only should the public not have to finance such dubious practices, it should not be compelled to participate, albeit unwittingly, in strategies that imperil the nature of traditional scientific conduct and collaboration.

HOWARD MANN
Salt Lake City, Utah

JAFFA DIARIST

See Change

WE ARE ENDING our three-and-a-half-month stay in Israel, and it is only now that I have the confidence to admit that I think the Oslo agreements were a mistake. Looking out from my rooftop apartment, I see the Mediterranean immediately to the west and the hills of Samaria not at all so remotely to the east. Tel Aviv, at its farthest, is 15 visible miles from the old frontier with the West Bank, and it is somewhere near this old border that the new one with nascent Palestine will be set. Some day soon, I fear and I expect, mortar and missiles will target old Israel from new Palestine, from those hills to here. Only an idiot can believe that Israel has strategic depth anywhere but on its frontier with Egypt—and that exception owes to the unique vastness of the Sinai.

THE FATAL FLAW OF THE OSLO process is process. Israel committed itself to an extended sequence of negotiation and concession, whereby it would make a series of permanent and palpable sacrifices, while what was expected of the Palestinians was mostly that they show up and mutter the empty formulas of reassurance. If they didn't like what and how much Israel was prepared to relinquish, the Palestinian Authority would simply leave the table and go home. Then, to get Arafat's men back to the table and to accommodate pressure from the United States, the Israelis would give away something more—all without even knowing what the outcome of all these leavings and takings would look like. What is being expected of Israel is magnanimity in the dark. Surely the friendship of the United States cannot make up for the blindfold that it is asking Israel to wear on the road to peace.

NOW WE LEARN THAT THE ISRAELI government is prepared to relinquish even the Jordan Valley, which until yesterday was considered off-limits by all but the most reckless peace processors. This must send shivers down the spines not only of

many Israelis but also of the moderate, friendly (and pro-American) royals in Amman, who know that without an Israeli presence there, the river Jordan will blow chilly and cold, and the Palestinians may begin to feel their old craving for the Hashemite kingdom. Iraq and Syria, too, have ambitions toward Jordan; and Israel can defend the Hashemites (and, of course, itself) only if its forces are strategically positioned to move directly and without interference from Arafat's legions.

THE FATHER OF THIS "WHAT'S YOURS is yours and what's mine is yours" process is Shimon Peres, the French intellectual who long ago bought into the great contemporary cliché that territory is no longer important in warfare. The preposterousness of this idea (which has its devotees in Washington, too) has been demonstrated in every modern war, from Vietnam to Iraq to the Balkans. The only certain consequence of the dependence upon air power has been disillusionment with the dependence upon air power. Neither bombs nor missiles will dislodge or disarm the adversary if his forces hold land. Early in June I heard Peres pronounce on just about everything important to Israel in a muddle of an after-dinner talk in Jerusalem. We will turn bullets into ballots. We will turn terrorists into tourists. Frontiers are of no importance. Science knows no borders. Science knows no language. The science of knowledge and the knowledge of science. One thing we do know is that Peres himself knows no science. If he did, he would know that science by itself makes neither people nor government virtuous. Science is neutral. In wicked hands, it is wicked. But the pundits now discern an inclination toward peace in Bashar al-Assad because he is an ophthalmologist.

EDWARD SAID MAY HAVE FABRICATED his life as a Palestinian refugee, but he was telling God's honest truth when he asserted in a recent column (reprinted in *The Jerusalem Post*!) that there is no "new peace between old enemies." The opposite proposition, he writes, "has been disproved by the examples of Egypt, Jordan and the PLO, whose leaders have gone all the way toward Israel without persuading their populations to follow suit.... Resistance to its presence is still strenuously displayed... the conventional wisdom about peacemaking in the Middle East has essentially been disproved." Said knows whereof he speaks: he is the most prestigious of all tenured rejectionists. But Israelis, mostly eager for peace, have begun to grasp that their neighbors do not reciprocate the eagerness. Whatever happens to Ehud Barak's government, the

popular enthusiasm for the Oslo process is fast unraveling. Indeed, it was a stroke of luck for Barak that Hafez al-Assad stiffed Bill Clinton in Geneva: had the bloody tyrant (now widely treated as a prudent statesman by, among others, the American president and secretary of state) agreed to take back the Golan Heights, leaving only a few symbolic yards on the eastern bank of the Sea of Galilee in Israel's hands, the Israeli electorate would almost certainly have rejected the deal.

SYRIAN PARTICIPATION IN THE negotiations over the Golan is not part of the Oslo drama, but it shares with Oslo two salient characteristics. The first is Syria's maximalist presumptions. Neither the Palestinians nor the Syrians are contemplating real compromise: they want nothing less than everything they lost in 1967. The second is the American role. In the negotiations over the Golan there was hardly even a pretense that the parties in conflict were talking to each other. (In Shepherdstown, remember, the Syrian foreign minister refused to shake the Israeli prime minister's hand.) But the legacy-addled American president was frantic for an agreement; and so the only real negotiating was between Washington and Jerusalem. To be sure, teams of Palestinians and Israelis talk to each other endlessly; but the real bargaining took place between the United States and Israel, with the United States always pushing Israel to give more and more and more.

MAYBE THERE WILL BE AN AGREEMENT with the Palestinians. But it won't cover Jerusalem, and it won't cover the Palestinian refugees (by the third and fourth generation, are they still refugees?). Still, Israel will have turned over to the emerging Palestinian state some 80 to 90 percent of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Then what? Every question left unresolved will become yet another cause for violence. In the eyes of many Palestinians, the imperfections of the deal will justify riot or terror or both. And what happens when an illegal missile is illegally launched from Palestine? I once asked a dovish Israeli friend what would happen if a post-peace Syria suddenly diverted the waters of the Golan from the Jordan to its own uses. He said that Israel would urgently seek a meeting of the Security Council. Urgently! From my sun-drenched roof I behold the Israeli miracle along the coast and I think: It was not the Security Council that secured this; it was self-reliance. Even people who are not friendless must establish their safety and their felicity for themselves.

MARTIN PERETZ

Will Israel cut its ties to the Jewish people?

THE JEWISH STATE

The Struggle for Israel's Soul

YORAM HAZONY

"*The Jewish State* is a bracing text to read: provocative, unrelenting, surprising and tough-minded. Yoram Hazony's criticisms of the demi-gods of the Israeli cultural pantheon will be upsetting to many. Nevertheless, this is an important book. It will become a part of the argument, attacked, defended, relied upon, made to be a symptom and a symbol."

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—NATAN SHARANSKY, Interior Minister, State of Israel

"Hazony's gripping book is a remarkable combination of intellectual history, political analysis and moral polemic. Everyone—and I really do mean everyone—interested in Israel and, for that matter, in contemporary Judaism, should read it."

—WILLIAM KRISTOL, Editor and Publisher, *The Weekly Standard*



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